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ABSTRACT

This collection of readings contains discussions of current professional debates on the issue of integrating students with disabilities, as well as stories of children's and families' experiences with integration and segregation, descriptions of Canadian school districts that have created model integration programs, and essays about new ways of planning for students. Titles and authors of selected papers include: "A Crime against Childhood--Uniform Curriculum at a Uniform Rate: Mainstreaming Re-examined and Redefined" (Donald Little); "Integration: Being Realistic Isn't Realistic" (Norman Kunc); "With a Little Help from My Friends: The Integration Facilitator at Work" (Annmarie Ruttimann and Marsha Forest); "One System, One Purpose: The Integration of Special and Regular Education" (William Stainback and Susan Stainback); "Keys to Integration: Common Sense Ideas and Hard Work" (Marsha Forest); and "A Two-Way Street: Integration through Peer Support" (Aleda O'Connor). Several articles describe integration in particular regions or school districts in Canada, focusing on Edmonton, Alberta; Mississauga, Ontario; New Brunswick; Northwest Territories; Hamilton-Wentworth, Ontario; and Waterloo, Ontario. Two articles describe the development of support circles to assist in the integration of students with disabilities: "The Circle: Making a Dream Come True" (Annmarie Ruttimann Hoskins) and "Circles" (Judith Snow and Marsha Forest.) (JDD)

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More Education for Integration

A further collection of readings on the integration of children with mental handicaps into regular school systems

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MORE EDUCATION/INTEGRATION

A further collection of readings on the integration of children with mental handicaps into regular school systems

Edited by Marsha Forest, Ed.D.

The G. Allan Roeher Institute

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Douglas Biklen

People are telling stories. This a book of stories, one about Carla who becomes the subject of her teachers, friends and parents' sympathetic planning for school integration. Another story recounts the integration process for high school student, Katherine Woronko. Norman Kunc tells the story of his friend who, like himself has cerebral palsy and who, despite everyone's warnings that he was being unrealistic, manages to secure apparatus for modifying a car, thus enabling him to get a driver's license. These and many other stories fill the pages of **More Education/Integration.**

The book includes lots of interesting and helpful discussions of current professional debates, for example whether or not the concept of "least restrictive environment" is outmoded and should be replaced by the far simpler idea of integration -- the answer is yes --; whether there is a place any more for a continuum of services that legitimizes segregated education -- the answer is no --; and whether whole school boards can commit themselves to achieving integration -- the answer is yes. These debates take on life, meaning and urgency as the many stories of children's and families' experiences with integration and segregation surround, explain and illustrate the arguments.

For a number of years, educators thought about integration as having been accomplished if students labelled disabled were able to receive their education within the walls of typical schools attended by unlabelled students as well. This book makes clear the fact that physical proximity does not constitute integration. Real integration must be purposeful. Hence, **More Education/Integration** reveals certain essential elements for integration: a belief that the education of each student is equally important; recognition that integration is not an experiment or a curricular innovation but is rather a constant aspect of quality schooling; opportunities for students of all abilities to develop friendships with each other; understanding that all students have gifts and can contribute to the life of a school and community; involvement of all the school's staff, not just special education and assessment experts, in making integration work; and use of cooperative learning, group goal structuring and other teaching approaches that encourage student participation. Much of the integration described in this book and becoming the standard for "full" or "complete" integration is happening by educating students of dramatically varying abilities in the same classrooms together.

Some practitioners might wish for a more didactic presentation on the how-to of integration. But, as quickly becomes apparent, the practical strategies and lessons of integration can easily be culled from the many stories, the numerous descriptions of school districts that have created model integration programs, and in the essays about new ways of planning for students. The MAPS Action Planning System developed by Forest and her colleagues at The Roeher Institute, for example, combines concern for planning with the personal growth of students. It helps make the school less a sorter and divider of students than an integrator and community builder. Not surprisingly, in the MAPS and other chapters, the authors challenge any education case planning that is dominated by professionals. Instead, they propose a radically different method.

This is a book rich in the emerging history of integration throughout Canada. Yet its stories engender impatience. As with every major leap forward in education, for example racial integration, ethnic preservation, or gender equity, the integration of students labelled disabled takes on the character of a social movement. Correctly, **More Education/Integration** raises questions and suggests different possible answers, but it is also an advocacy manual. It presents a distinctly pro-integration point of view. And it introduces many of the parents and children who have played the leadership roles in this young social movement. It also asks for allies. Each story forces us to ask: what is our role, and what will our role be in getting the idea of integration accepted and in making the practice of integration work?

Douglas Biklen
Syracuse, NY
October, 1987

THE SYSTEM

The kaleidoscope:
Challenge to the cascade

Marsha Forest and Evelyn Lusthaus

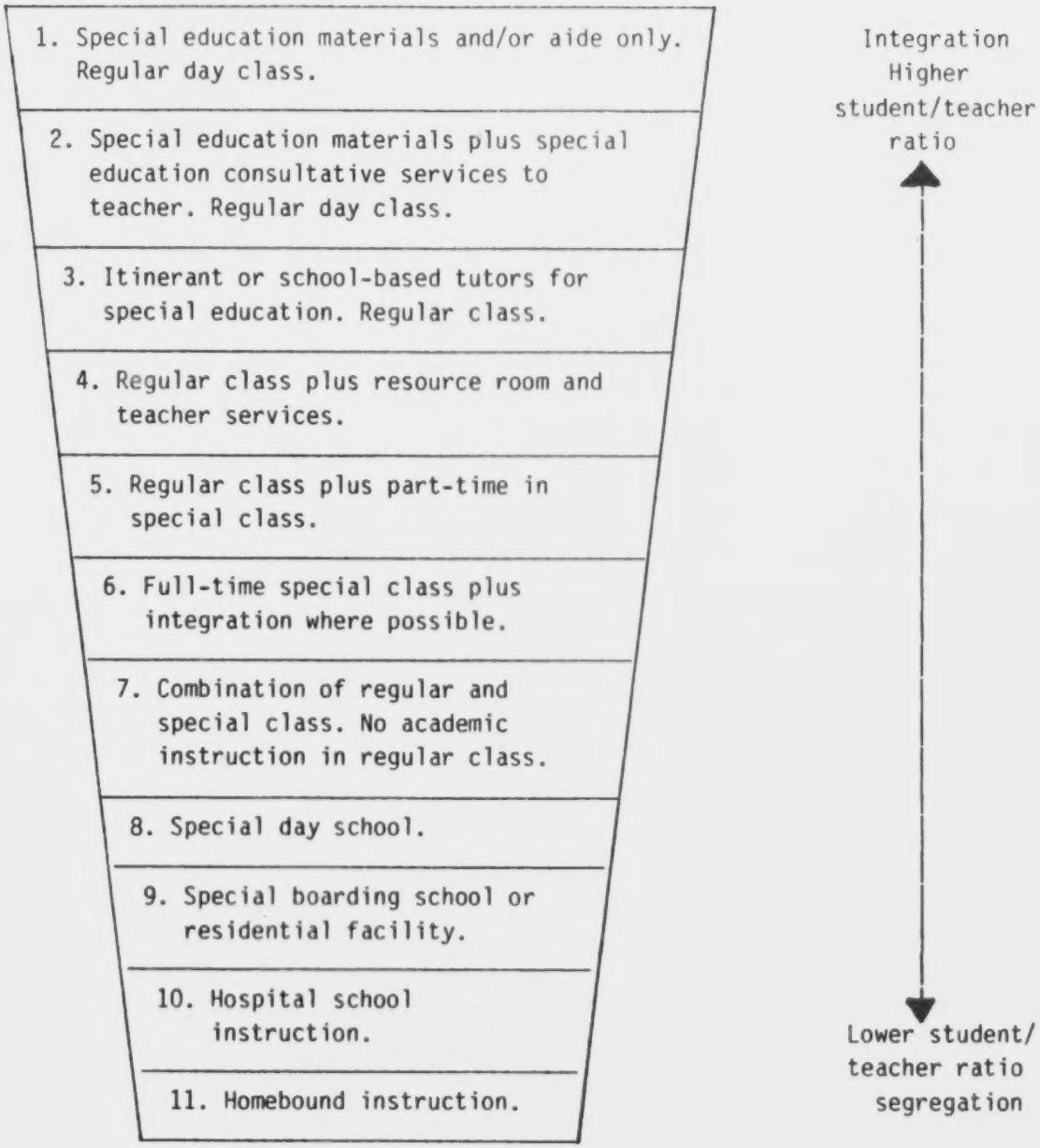
The marvellous folksinger Malvina Reynolds made famous a song entitled "Little Boxes." "We all live in little boxes," she sang in her cracking voice, as she raised issue with the powerful expectations, roles and restrictions that society places on its members.

As people get cast into little boxes in the strata of society, so also do children go to school where there are little boxes. These little boxes have labels such as "regular stream" or "special education" and children who are placed into these little boxes are often labelled as "normal children" or "special education students."

In their classic text entitled **Teaching Exceptional Children in All America's Schools,** Reynolds and Birch (1982) described the "two box" model of education that was prevalent before the 1960s. In the "two box" conceptualization, there were two types of children -- regular and special. There were also two types of programs to serve the children -- regular and special. Children who were placed into the special education box were seen to need special settings, special teachers, special methods and special materials in order to learn. Educators tended to see all children as fitting into one box or the other and they developed separate and distinct services for each type of child.

The cascade

In the 1960s, when it became clearer that children did not fall neatly into one category or the other, the two box model became more diversified and evolved into the cascade model. The cascade model recognized that children were more complex than simply either "normal" or "disabled." It conceptualized children as having levels of disability, such that each child could fall somewhere on a continuum of disability, from non-disabled to severely disabled. In order to serve children of varying levels of disability, the cascade model proposed that a continuum of placement options should be available. The continuum of placements and services is depicted as an inverted pyramid which contains eleven administrative plans in special education for students with disabilities, ranging from fully integrated to fully segregated settings and from a higher student/teacher ratio to a lower student/teacher ratio.


1. Special education materials and/or aide only. Regular day class.
2. Special education materials plus special education consultative services to teacher. Regular day class.
3. Itinerant or school-based tutors for special education. Regular class.
4. Regular class plus resource room and teacher services.
5. Regular class plus part-time in special class.
6. Full-time special class plus integration where possible.
7. Combination of regular and special class. No academic instruction in regular class.
8. Special day school.
9. Special boarding school or residential facility.
10. Hospital school instruction.
11. Homebound instruction.
Integration
Higher student/teacher ratio
Lower student/ teacher ratio
segregation

For more than two decades, the cascade model has been the accepted conceptualization of service delivery for children with special needs throughout North America. In the United States, it underlies the concept of least restrictive environment articulated in P.L.94-142. This legislation mandates that each child be placed in the least restrictive of the placement options outlined in the cascade model. In Canada, the cascade model has been used as an administrative model for delivering special education services throughout the provinces. Cited in the pivotal Copex Report, the cascade model was used as a basis for recommending that children be placed into the most normal setting possible for their level of disability.

Despite its wide acceptance as an administrative model for special education services, we believe that the cascade model is based on faulty assumptions that need to be examined and refuted:

1. **Regular classrooms are not appropriate for all children.**

In the cascade model, it is assumed that normally developing children learn best in regular classrooms, but that children with increasing levels of disability need settings that are increasingly specialized. Some children are thought to be "too handicapped" to benefit from being educated with "regular" children; they are thought to need special settings, special teachers and special methods.

However, the regular classroom can be an effective learning environment for children with special needs, even when they have very challenging needs. A growing number of schools and school boards have accepted children with very challenging needs into regular classrooms, and have found this setting to be productive and rich learning environment for them (Forest, 1984, 1987). Many of these children have been labelled with terms such as severely or profoundly mentally retarded, yet they have been able to thrive in the regular classroom. These school boards have worked on the assumption that EACH BELONGS, and they have committed themselves to including all children in their neighbourhood schools with their brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours (Each Belongs, 1984).

2. **Placement is based upon the characteristics of the child.**

The cascade model is based on the assumption that a child's level of ability or disability should be the primary criteria for placement. In deciding upon placement, professionals examine factors within the child such as intelligence quotient, academic level in subject areas, behaviour traits, age, physical characteristics, social abilities and so on.

However, successful placement in integrated settings depends upon factors

outside of the child as well as those within the child. The commitment of the staff in the school and the resources allocated to the classroom seem to be particularly important (Biklen, 1985; Certo, Haring & York, 1984: Forest, 1987). Successful integration is related to many conditions outside the child which are not explicit in the cascade model, such as commitment, resources, time, energy, number of teachers, school environment -- in other words, what the school provides to make the child a valued participant, to make the child belong.

3. All placements on the cascade are viable.

In the cascade model, all the placement options are seen as viable for at least some children. Regular classes are seen as viable for children who have mild disabilities; partially segregated settings are thought appropriate for children with more moderate disabilities; and totally segregated, institutional placements are viewed as beneficial for children with severe and/or profound levels of handicap.

However, we believe that segregation and segregated settings are inappropriate for all children. The enormous problems inherent in segregated settings for people with disabilities have been well-documented (Blatt, 1970; Bogden & Taylor, 1982; Wolfensberger, 1975). The rationales behind integrated settings have been described as well, and they include such basic concepts as the ethical and moral imperatives behind integrated education; the learning gains of children in integrated settings; and the social gains by the entire school community when children with challenging needs are incorporated (Bricker, 1978; Certo, Haring & York, 1984; Stainback & Stainback, 1985). We believe that if and when segregated settings **are** used, they should be seen as a compromise, rather than an acceptable placement for some "types" of students.

4. Movement up and down the cascade is the norm.

In the cascade pyramid, the assumption exists that there is movement up and down the continuum of service options. The model implies that children experiencing difficulties in regular classes, for example, can be placed into a special class for remedial help and later returned to the regular classroom.

However, it is rare that children actually return to integrated settings once they have been labelled and placed into special classes or special schools. More typically, once children are placed into special settings they remain there, often not only during their school years but in their adult years as well, as they "graduate" into sheltered work settings. Thus, movement down the cascade is the norm but movement back up the cascade is a rarity, partly because children must earn the right to be in the next level by proving

themselves as "able to be integrated" or "ready for integration." Recently a young parent of a five-year-old student with challenging educational needs said, "My child is not a salmon. She can't swim upstream... she can't get up your cascade... if she tries, she'll drown."

5. **Teachers in specialized settings are better equipped to teach children with challenging needs than are regular class teachers.**

Inherent in the cascade model is the notion that specialized settings benefit children with challenging needs because they are staffed with teachers who have been trained and prepared to teach the children. These teachers are better able to "handle" the children than are ordinary teachers; they use methods and materials that are better matched to the needs of special learners.

However, this is a very questionable assumption. Are teachers in specialized settings better prepared and more skilled in teaching children with special needs than regular class teachers? Is their teaching different from that of ordinary teachers? Gottlieb, Alter and Gottlieb (1983) reported on a study in which few substantive differences were found in teaching behaviours between the 400 regular class teachers and 150 special class teachers studied. The authors noted that "the kinds of teaching behaviour that occurred in special and regular classes were remarkably consistent," (p. 72). We believe that competent regular classroom teachers, with appropriate support on the job, can be well equipped to teach students with challenging needs.

6. **Integration is an amount of time spent with non-handicapped children.**

Perhaps the most disturbing element in the use of the cascade is the misunderstanding of integration. Integration is operationalized as an amount of time that a child spends in a situation with typical children. Integration is thought of as a subject, a thing, a piece. School systems actually write down that "Sarah shall have 20 minutes a week of integration in recess" or, "Jason will be integrated in Garden Mills School for one half day per week." These are real quotations from school board files.

What does integration really mean? We looked to the dictionary and found these four descriptions:

1. the act or an instance of combining into an integral whole
2. behaviour in harmony with the environment
3. a coordinated, harmonious whole
4. the combination of educational other public facilities, previously segregated, into one unified system.

The key words here are INTEGRAL WHOLE, UNIFIED SYSTEM, HARMONIOUS WHOLE.

The cascade model is none of those things. It is an outdated and outmoded concept. It implies through its triangular image that many children require settings more restrictive than the ordinary classroom.

Instead, we suggest an image of a kaleidoscope for visualizing services to children with challenging needs.

Once again, we consulted the dictionary for a definition of terms. A kaleidoscope is:

1. an optical instrument in which bits of glass, beads, etc., held loosely at the end of rotating tube, are shown in continually changing symmetrical forms be reflection in two or more mirrors set at angles to each other;
2. changing, complex, teeming, various, etc., in a manner suggesting changing patterns.

The kaleidoscope requires ALL the bits and pieces. Remove some, and the resulting patern is less complex, less rich. Children thrive, grow and learn in reach, complex environments.

Together, the kaleidoscope pieces create uniquely beautiful patterns, pictures that cannot be created by any one piece or any group of pieces alone. Children thrive, grow and learn with the knowledge that each and every one of them makes unique contributions, that they are needed for their uniqueness, that without their presence and participation their families, classrooms, schools and neighbourhoods would not be the same. All children need environments that value them, as individuals, for their differences.

The definition also tells us that the kaleidoscope patterns are continually changing just as people are continually changing. We are all bits and pieces of this and that. When put together in communities, we can become beautiful patterns of something we call society. The change and growth in the individuals ensures that the society changes and grows.

The inclusion of all people ensure environments which promote individual change and growth. Our communities become complete and rich.

The kaleidoscope is circular. There are no boxes within the circle, no hierarchical arrangements for learning. We fill the circle with our unique colours, shapes and sizes. We are all in this together. Remove a group of us and the pattern falls away.

School systems using a kaleidoscope image focus their attention on ordinary classrooms in ordinary schools. Here, all children -- with their unique backgrounds, gifts and special needs -- learn together in regular classrooms, in neighbourhood schools. In these school boards, a pattern emerges:

1. All children in a community are welcomed into their local school.
2. A child with a challenging educational need lives in the community.
3. The parent registers the child in the local school.
4. The parent and child are welcomed.
5. The child begins school in an ordinary classroom with children his or her own age.
6. The school arranges meetings to discuss how best to meet the needs of the child.
7. Life goes on.

Carla comes to school: the kaleidoscope at work

In the spring of 1986, Mr. and Mrs. Barabadoro and their daughter Carla came to their local school to register Carla for seventh grade. Carla was labelled severely mentally retarded, but her parents requested that the local school permit Carla to attend class with other children her age, beginning the following September.

The principal welcomed the family enthusiastically and told them how excited he was to have Carla in their school. He also admitted that he and his staff had a certain amount of anxiety about having a child with such challenging needs entering a regular grade 7 class and that they wanted to do their very best.

A meeting was set in June before the end of school, just to sit down and chat about the overall expectations for Carla's schooling. The principal, the receiving home room teacher and Carla's parents were there. The principal asked about the parents' expectations, explained in general the school program, and provided an overall picture of how Carla could be included.

Immediately before school began, another short meeting was held with the principal, the receiving teacher (Peter) and the parents. At this time, a team of people who could be helpful were invited. Because Carla has a mental handicap, a special education resource person was present. Because her language was very limited, the speech and language resource people were there. Because she was being integrated into the school, an outside consultant was invited. This was the beginning of building a planning team for Carla.

At this meeting, everyone agreed that for two weeks, the teacher, the students and Carla all needed to get to know one another before any specific planning would take place. It was decided that Carla would follow the regular grade 7-8 day and Peter would get to know Carla without an educational assistant present. At the end of the two weeks, another team meeting would be held.

On the first day, Peter was exhausted and tense, but by the third day, he mentioned that he was "amazed at how much Carla could do" and that he was getting to know her very well, particularly because the "aide" wasn't there. Could he handle it for two weeks? Yes, as long as after the two weeks the team got together again.

During these two weeks, the consultant approached Carla's class of peers to begin building a friendship circle around her. This involved speaking honestly and directly to the students about why Carla was being integrated and what the students could do to be involved in the process. The consultant asked for volunteers to form a friendship circle around Carla. Nineteen students volunteered and the teacher selected four main actors.

A telephone committee was formed so that Carla would get one telephone call each evening from one of her new classmates. Carla had never received her own phone call in her whole life, and despite her limited language, she was able to communicate with her new friends.

Planning using MAPS

When the day of the team meeting arrived, the principal provided pizza for the two-hour session that was intended to be the beginning of a formal planning process for Carla's school program. The process they followed was based on the MAPS Action Planning System developed in 1986 by Forest, Lusthaus and Snow at McGill University (Forest, Snow & Lusthaus, 1987). MAPS is a systems approach to help team members plan for the integration of students with challenging needs into regular age-appropriate classrooms.

A unique feature of the MAPS planning team is the inclusion of children in the planning process. As William, the principal of Carla's school said, "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it." He was referring to the influence and power of student participation in the planning process. We believe the inclusion of students is a key element in the MAPS process. Students are often the most under-used resource in our schools. The point of the planning exercise is to come up with a plan that makes good sense for Carla. In our experience, students often understand this far better than adults, and unless some young people are present, we will not get the same results.

The meeting opened with a review of the events to date. Overall, it had been a good two weeks. Peter, the class and Carla had gotten to know each other. Now it was time to focus on seven questions that are at the heart of the MAPS planning process:

1. What is Carla's history?
2. What is your dream for Carla as an adult?
3. What is your nightmare?
4. Who is Carla?
5. What are Carla's strengths, gifts and talents?
6. What are Carla's needs?
7. What would Carla's ideal day at school look like and what must be done to make it happen?

1. What is Carla's history?

The first question is meant to give everyone a picture of what has happened in Carla's life. They were asked to summarize the key milestones that made an impact on the student's life and how they have affected the child's schooling. For example, one key period in Carla's life occurred when she was hospitalized for about a year and not expected to live. Someone from the family was with her day and night which affected Carla's ability to be without her mother once she went back to school.

2. What is your dream for Carla as a adult?

Parents of children with handicaps have often lost their ability to dream. They haven't had the opportunity to really think about what they want most for their children. This question restores their ability to have a vision based on what they really want rather than what they think they can get. Carla's parents said they wanted her to go to high school with her brothers, to get a job, and one day to live with some friends in the community.

3. What is your nightmare?

The nightmare makes explicit what is implicit in the heart of every parent of a child with a handicap. The Barabadoros said, "We're afraid Carla will end up in an institution, work in a sheltered workshop and have no one when we die."

4. Who is Carla?

The next question was meant to begin a general brainstorming session on who Carla is, no holds barred. The facilitator asked everyone to go around the circle and give words until all thoughts were exhausted. This is how Carla's "who" question was answered.

12 years old

lives with mom and dad
has two brothers
loves touch and warmth
playful
inquisitive
small
dependent
fun to be with
smiling
lively
happy
aware
has a sense of humour
pulls her hair
speaks in some words and sentences
sings la la la
very good memory
temperamental
has her own way of communicating
wants to be involved
a real personality
stubborn

The facilitator then asked the parents to circle three words they felt best described Carla. Mrs. Barabadoro circled happy, temperamental and real personality. Mr. Barabadoro circled aware, memory and small. One of the teachers circled temperamental, small and memory. The students circled personality, small and lively.

From the above we get a picture of an individual. Rule: no jargon, no labels, just describe how you see the person. A person emerges who is unique and different from anybody else.

5. What are Carla's strengths, gifts and talents?

All too often we focus on what a person's weak areas are. Many parents have problems with this, as they have been focussing on negatives for so long. This switches the tables and tide to the positives. Here's how Carla's group responded:

she's a real personality
she has a good memory
she loves people
she's a good communicator
she talks a lot

she has a loving family
she's persistent
she's inquisitive
she's daring
she loves music.

The facilitator then focussed the group on what things Carla can do:

she can follow directions
she can walk at a reasonable rate
she runs
she dresses herself
she undresses herself -- with a little help
she eats by herself
she can turn on the VCR
she can use tapes on her own
she can use the tape recorder
she washes her hands
she brushes her teeth.

At this point many of the group were surprised to hear all the things Carla can do. The facilitator then gave a homework assignment. The parents were to go home and sit down with Carla's brothers and write down the things Carla can do independently, and also what she can do with some assistance. Carla's relatives, especially a close aunt and her grandmother, were to do another list and so were the teachers and students at the school. Everyone was to bring these lists to the next meeting.

6. What are Carla's needs?

Needs vary depending on who is defining them, so the facilitator divided the group to get a variety of points of view from those present. Here is how Carla's group saw things:

NEEDS according to parents:

Carla needs a communication system
she needs a way to express feelings and emotions
she needs to be independent
she needs self-motivation in starting things she cannot do
she needs to stop pulling her hair
she needs friends at home and at school.

NEEDS according to the grade 7-8 students present:

she needs to be with her own age group
she needs to feel like one of the group
she needs to wear teenage clothes
she needs goop on her hair
she needs to have her ears pierced

she needs to have her ears pierced
she needs a boyfriend.

NEEDS according to the teachers (these were in agreement with the parents, plus):

she needs to fit in and be part of the group.

We summarized that, according to everyone there were four main needs:

1. Carla needs friends at home and at school.
2. Carla needs a communication system. To begin to define this, we need to know how she communicates. Everyone (parents, teachers and students) will do homework and describe how Carla communicates.
3. Carla needs to learn to be more independent.
4. Carla needs to stop pulling her hair.

6. What would Carla's ideal day at school look like and what must be done to make it happen?

To many, Carla is a student with a severe to profound mental handicap who should be segregated in a school or class for students with handicaps. To her receiving school, she is a spunky 12-year-old and should be in grade 7-8 with her peers. The school had all the right ingredients:

- a co-operative family
- a welcoming and co-operative school principal
- a nervous but inviting teacher
- a child with many challenging needs
- 27 grade 7-8 students.

And so, with a team approach, with the idea that they did not have all the answers and with a spirit of adventure, the team started to create a plan.

Peter indicated that his main need was for an educational assistant at various times of the day and a program created by the special education resource people.

New the team was ready for the plan of the day. Step by step, the facilitator took the team through the day and determined activities, goals, objectives and environments. In may IPP or EIP processes, goals and objectives stand outside the rhythm of the school day. Goals and objectives, however, must flow from the environment and be intertwined with the daily schedule and rhythm of the classroom.

Carla's day

8:40 - 8:45 a.m. The day begins

Carla arrives in a taxi and is met by Susie and some other children. Who

will be responsible to get Carla from the taxi to the classroom? Volunteer: Susie.

8:45 - 8:55. Opening exercises
Carla will sit at her desk in the second row, in the middle of the room and sing **O, Canada** and participate in the beginning of the day.

8:55 - 9:30. Language Arts Period
Does it make sense for Carla to follow the grade 7 program? Does it meet her needs? No. Can it be modified? No. Should she have her own program in the language and communications area? Yes. Where should this take place? In the room at the side table where other students do individualized work. The educational assistant will carry out a program designed by the special education resource team dealing with functional reading, writing and speaking.

9:30 - 10:10. French
After much discussion, all agreed that Carla enjoys French. Although the French teacher welcomes Carla, she shouldn't stay for the whole period. She will stay 20 minutes for the conversational French portion of the class, songs, weather, etc. She will listen, learn to recognize French, and learn a few words. She can learn numbers, colours and point to some pictures in French. Peter and the French teacher will design this with the assistance of the special education resource person. No educational assistant is needed at this time slot.

9:50 - 10:10. Individualized Computer Program Work
Carla will work on the computer with the educational assistant or by herself in the home room classroom where everyone else uses the computer. Programs will be developed in co-operation with the communications team of the board.

10:10 - 10:25. Recess
Carla will get ready to go out with a volunteer circle of friends. They will make sure she isn't trampled...

10:30 - 11:00. The grade 7-8 class has either French or Communications
At this time a creative communication program developed by the board is being put in place for Carla. For example, one goal is learning to use and talk on the telephone. The school principal volunteered both his office and phone (no long distance calls) and Carla will learn to dial and talk on the telephone.

11:10 - 11:20. Silent Reading

Carla will choose library books and do silent reading along with her classmates. No extra help needed except for peers.

11:20 - 11:50. Religion

Carla will have a modified program designed by Peter and the special education resource teacher with no extra assistance except other children. She will have tasks to complete along with other students, but they will be at her level of performance.

11:50 - 12:30. Lunch

Carla will eat with a group of friends and the assistant will be available and on call, but out of sight. She will go out or stay in with her friends to listen to music or play as the rest of the gang does.

12:30 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch hour continues

Carla will have some quiet time with the other students to read books or listen to music, tapes, records or videos. She will be with a circle of friends (boys and girls).

1:05 - 2:05. Math

Carla will have a parallel math program and work with the educational assistant on learning to use the computer, calculator, counting, numbers and shopping.

2:05 - 2:20. Recess

2:20 - 3:30. Rotary

It was agreed that this would be inappropriate for Carla, and here is where an in-school work experience can be built in. Carla, who likes plants, will work with the educational assistant in taking care of all the plants in the school. They will also buy seeds and plant new plants, and in the spring they will plant them outdoors. Everyone thought this was a great idea and Vicki will carry it out in co-operation with Peter.

3:30 - Dismissal

Carla's day is full and has a variety of environments, activities and events. Her parents like it. Carla likes it and it will be revised and reviewed as needed. It is fluid, not set in stone. The overall objectives for communication, independence and friends are built into the entire day. It makes sense. We can answer WHY to every moment of the day.

Conclusion

Of course, providing Carla with a good education within the ordinary classroom means the commitment of help and resources to the regular class. This requires a change in perspective of the entire school board so that special education personnel and resources can be used to support children in ordinary rather than in separate classrooms.

Where are these changes occurring? They are found in school boards where administrators are working to achieve a school system that includes **all** children learning together. As George Flynn, Director of the Waterloo County Roman Catholic Separate School Board recently said, "We are committed to quality education for ALL children; this means ALL children attending school together."

Quality education means effective teaching of the 3R's, but it also includes emphasis on another R: RELATIONSHIPS. Relationships are an important part of the image of the kaleidoscope, for the kaleidoscope is an image of diversity and colour where children learn to build relationships with others who have different needs.

The kaleidoscope incorporates the beauty of the children who have been left out -- the children with disabilities, who have always been told they don't belong. As they bring their gifts and special needs to the ordinary classroom and enter into relationships with their neighbours and classmates, they can add to the quality of education for everybody.

The story of Carla is not unique. Increasingly, in school boards across Canada children with very challenging educational needs are attending age-appropriate classrooms in their neighbourhood schools. These children provide a challenge to their educators, who are striving to provide them with services as they learn alongside their non-handicapped peers. These students also provide a challenge to us as a special education community. We must ask ourselves whether our use of the cascade model is holding back the students' opportunities for full participation. They are showing us that they are able to learn and grow in the world of diversity... will we keep them locked into the cascade?

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A crime against childhood -- uniform curriculum at a uniform rate: mainstreaming re-examined and redefined

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Continuing opposition to integration of the more severely disabled into regular classrooms; resistance to mainstreaming practices, generally; and individualizing curriculum, are major concerns. The nature of handicappism with its doctrine of separation and two-box system of service, vs the side-by-side principle is examined. A case for special-ordinary education is made in the context of the Effective Schools Movement. Success structuring, development and maintenance of the Most Enhancing Environment as opposed to placement in the Least Restrictive Environment, and appropriate goal settings, are discussed. The need for re-examining a uniform curriculum and lock-step practices is argued. As part of the recommended change process, mainstreaming is redefined vis-à-vis barriers to special-ordinary education, integration/interaction, and the creation of community out of accepted differences.

The purpose of this paper is to challenge objections to mainstreaming; to review the current literature, research, and recent experience of mainstreaming programs as practiced in segregated education; and to confront the doctrine of separation. We cannot consider these elements apart from considering attitudes and policies; referring to terms like zero-reject, normalization, least restrictive environment (LRE), unique instructional need, individual education plan (I.E.P.), school-based team, open systems (personalized education), accessibility, continuous progress (vs automatic promotion, or social promotion), and planned change, to name a few.

What do these terms mean, anyway? Are these terms (with their implied actions) to be dismissed as universally unattainable fantasies of impractical visionaries? Are they among a litany of fervent prayers for relief from a hitherto intellectually elite educational bureaucracy which might lead to a hope for improvement in the lot of those distinguished by their diagnosed differences? It all depends on where one sits and under what belief system one is operating. Perhaps these terms are but a comforting collection of concepts intended to convince others that something significant is happening, that we welcome differences, that the handicapped are getting a good deal, that we can congratulate ourselves that we are at least doing something in the best interests of the child, -- or perhaps it is in the best interests of those who may

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have to work with the child. On these questions hangs the fate of a least 25 percent of the school population variously referred to by the Dreadful D's: disabled, disordered, disadvantaged, different, dumb, deficient, distractable, disturbing -- or in a word deviant, if not defective. The danger in all of this is an attitude detrimental to mainstreaming; a tendency to think in terms of a uniform prescribed curriculum, of the disability rather than the person, and of looking at the disability rather than the ability hence building a case against the child, rather than for the child's inclusion in the regular classroom.

Handicappism and the doctrine of separation

Thus, handicap becomes handicappism, which is institutionalized educational prejudice that interferes with equal educational opportunities for exceptional students, and restricts access (Stephens, et al, 1982, p.29)... to needs based programming in the regular classroom (Wellington County Separate School Board, Guelph, Ont. offers an alternative to the least restrictive environment a situation called the most enhancing environment). The greater danger is the negative results of stereotyping which equates different with undesirable and disabled with unable. Inherent in these stereotype attitudes about children's differences is the doctrine of separation -- separation in relating to their limitations or severity of their difficulty.

The two-box theory vs the side-by-side principle

The negative attitude of educators has been labelled the "two-box theory." Children are considered as exceptional or normal (Reynolds & Birch, 1977, in Stephens, et al, 1982, p.27). Education is considered as special or regular, resulting in a two-box system, regular school or segregation -- segregated professionals; segregated transportation; segregated programs by disability categories; and segregated teacher education with its specialty certification (It is common to hear reference to the "SPEDS" and the "REGS" -- as if all were not educators and without any respect for the characteristics of the learners). It is not a matter of whether segregation, in the form of a two-box system, is unacceptable. It is a matter of whether we are ready to commit ourselves to the alternative: mainstreaming, defined as the most enhancing environment, vs the least restrictive environment.

Returning to the two-box theory, the idea is deeply ingrained in educational thinking that there are two types of children, the disabled and the non-disabled... but the complexities of individual need are far greater than this dichotomy implies (Warnock, 1973), necessitating a broadened view which allows a "side-by-side" approach to educating handicapped and non-handicapped students, which in turn encourages frequent interactions among students, teachers

and staff within the school (Certo, et al, 1984, p.7). Notwithstanding the "side-by-side" sentiment of many educators (not be to construed as, "They are better with their own kind"), there is still a deep commitment by administrators and teachers to homogeneous grouping, or quasi streaming approaches to instruction -- in essence, commitment to the doctrine of separation. The point being made is that **special** education has become **separate** education -- separate policies, separate budget, separate facilities, separate supervision, and separate status. Separate education is not integrated education, it is the antithesis of mainstreamed education.

Success structuring

Mainstreaming requires that regular classroom teachers accept greater responsibility for children who are not succeeding. The emphasis is on what the teacher does, not on what the child does -- this is the essence of professional accountability. The concern with mainstreaming approaches is with providing regular classroom teachers with information, resources and suggestions that will help them work more effectively with children who are experiencing learning difficulties, failure to thrive, or failure itself on one, or another, dimension. Mainstreamining is characterized by success structuring, not wholesale dumping. One thing is certain: if a child is not learning in the accepted sense, we as teachers must question the validity of our teaching strategies. We must keep changing our methods and procedures until we get the desired performance from the learner. If we do not try alternative strategies, then it can only be concluded that the child suffers from a teaching disability rather than a learning disability, i.e. from a system disability (Henson, 1976). If one accepts the premise that teaching is making learning happen, then it is true that the child has not learned because the teacher has not taught.

Mainstreaming is based on an inherent belief, a conscious philosophy, that no child is ineducable, that all children can learn, that all learning is legitimate learning (e.g., self-help skills, maintaining on-task behaviour, social graces, academic achievement, grooming, improved self-concept, attending, play, etc.); that learning, to be successful, has to be individualized and personalized; personalized in the sense that the learner enjoys an intimate relationship between the task to be learned and the attainment of his/her own needs or goals. Increasingly it is being realized that this learning can, and therefore should, take place right in the regular classroom. Normalization becomes the goal of human services delivery, a goal which supports the view that people should be served by the "utilization of means which are as culturally normative as possible" (Wolfensberger, 1972) and not that the goal is to normalize all those with special needs, (i.e., make them normal, or just like me). Integration is a key constituent in mainstreaming. Integration equalis interaction.

Integration/interaction is the forerunner of a more deliberate, extensive, planned, service delivery system, which is increasingly normalized (i.e., is more alike than different) in the mainstreaming movement. Mainstreaming is possible when one accepts certain basic principles which make the whole of education special. That is to say, mainstreaming provides a range or hierarchy of special services and special programs which meet individual needs. Note the shift in terminology and hence the implication of a conceptual shift, from special education to special services and from special classes to special programs in regular classes.

Discant cum ceteris: the integration action group

The concept of mainstreaming allows students to be together and involved in a community of peers who are both alike and different, often significantly so. Within an ordinary school environment, mainstreaming, or integration/interaction, will provide for the flourishing and acceptance of special individual differences, and success in relation to appropriate goals. (This cannot be over-stressed. Simply stated, special education has appropriate goals. Ordinary education too often has inappropriate goals; hence, unattainable ones, given the learning conditions in a classroom with a uniform curriculum at a uniform rate.) Differences are valued. The special-ordinary teacher feels her or his job is to increase differences, not to remove them from the regular classroom.

The recognition of individual differences, either actual or perceived, among children, youngsters are educated in an environment most like that of their age mates. For one, that might be in a regular classroom which has a door widened to accommodate a wheelchair. For another, this could be a withdrawal situation for varying periods of the school day for learning assistance, enrichment projects, a resource program, or a shortened school day. For another, it might mean a semester of on-the-job training. Still others may require the support of a personal attendant, a teacher aide, or a child care worker in order to maintain ordinary classroom attendance. In addition, in order to ensure that mainstreaming does not violate the principle of the least restrictive alternative, or a zero-reject policy (i.e., all are entitled to an educational program without reference to the severity or extent of the disability), programs may also need to be provided temporarily in special classes, intensively in special settings, or longer term in special schools -- if only to ensure the choice of educational setting most preferred by various individuals in the home-school-community partnership. The communal classroom as the only alternative is yet to be proved as a viable model, in spite of its apparent success in certain school districts in Ontario, which have been visited by the writer.

A temperate dispute: how far is so far, and no farther?

The work of Forest at The G. Allan Roeher Institute (formerly the National Institute on Mental Retardation), (Integration/Education), Waters in Guelph, Ont., (Growing Together), Hansen in Hamilton, Ont., (Each Belongs), and a totally integrated school in Toronto, Ont., (Thousand Cranes), has sparked sharp divisions between segregationists (special education separatists) who in the name of mainstreaming use the Least Restrictive Environment -- the official position of the Council for Exceptional Children -- and integrationists (special education radicals) who in the name of mainstreaming have created the Most Enhancing Environment -- the most normative setting. Inter-Board correspondence between Nova Scotia and Ontario education officials; an east coast board's parent survey on mainstream integration preferences; and the Halifax Chronicle-Herald newspaper advertisement of August 28, 1985, inviting the public to a discussion of a local board's mainstream position, are all indicators of the intensity of the mainstreaming disagreement among Board Members, administrators, teachers, parents, and the public. What is the fuss? What are the objections to mainstreaming? How far is so far and no further? What are the barriers to successful special-ordinary (mainstream) education? What are the answers?

What is the fuss?

The fuss is mainly a philosophical-professional-practical one; philosophical in the sense of Sarason & Dorris's (1979) question of how we are going to live together --the abled and the disabled; professional in the sense of who is qualified? ("I couldn't do that."); who is responsible? ("Not my job!") and who decides? ("Where is it written?"); and practical in the sense of the changes involved in modifying curriculum, adapting methods and individualizing instruction. Unfortunately, the people involved simply do not have the attitude toward the school as a place for "creating community" out of accepted differences (Reeves, 1952); -- witness the Doctrine of Separation -- there is a pervasive belief that the disabled are best educated with their own kind; -- witness the Two-box Theory -- there is an unwarranted assurance that invoking the Principle of the Least Restrictive Environment will guarantee what is best in the interests of all concerned. This is simply not the case because there are no guarantees that children will be properly placed; nor that existing environments will be accommodating.

In summary, the weight of tradition, teachers' belief systems, attitudes to the handicapped, territorial rights and turf defending, empire building, self-preservation vs self-renewal, resistance to change, threat and distrust among the major players, are what the fuss is all about.

Objections to mainstreaming

There are at least ten common objections to mainstreaming. They are:

1. It might dissolve the service delivery system that has evolved for children with special needs.

2. The quality of education that regular class teachers would provide may be questionable.

3. The child may not be ready for the regular class, and would fail there.

4. There are concerns about the emotional reaction of children placed in regular settings.

5. It is simply a way to cut budgets for special education.

6. There would be no need for special educators, thus forcing them out of their jobs.

7. Regular teachers cannot be retrained or upgraded quickly enough and in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the handicapped in ordinary classes.

8. No one can teach 30 different kids in 30 different ways.

9. Too much of the teacher's time is taken up working with the mainstream students.

10. It's impractical and puts an unfair burden on the teacher.

Barriers to successful mainstreaming

Concerned, observant teachers (special-ordinary teachers) have been mainstreaming for years. It can be seen in the accommodation of children's differences with various seating arrangements, flexible grouping practices, adjusted evaluation approaches, adapted teaching methods, alternative assignments and ways for children to demonstrate their learning and differences in curriculum content, rate, and intensity among the learners. Such teachers welcome differences, and see part of their role as increasing differences, not removing them; certainly not ignoring them, or worse, rejecting them. It has to be remembered that the setting (i.e., the conditions of learning) in which the child is being asked to perform a task may be responsible for the child being unable to accomplish it, rather than an inability to perform the task itself. The curriculum question of content, rate, duration and intensity arises. The

existence of a uniform curriculum at a uniform rate for the class spells failure for those not yet ready, those with different learning styles, those who learn in slow motion, and joyless boredom for those who learn in fast time. There is no handicap where the institutionalized barriers to success in the regular class have been removed. The grade-a-year system, with its prescribed curriculum, is the enemy of mainstreaming and the agent of failure for children with unique instructional needs. The grade-a-year structure is the major obstacle to meaningful integration of the disabled, it is the bastion of rigidity and rejection. The fortress called the regular classroom is today for, too many, a forbidden country. It has to be reconstituted as a promised land if it is to become a genuinely normalized opportunity for those now in special classes and those in segregated or semi-segregated settings. Such a shift means moving from a most restrictive environment to a most enhancing environment.

Another formidable barrier to mainstreaming is the back-to-basics movement, the setting of unrealistic and unattainable standards for a large proportion of the school population. There is in this the cult of perfectionism which is embodied in claims of high standards, which in reality are impossible standards when applied uniformly, and arbitrarily, without regard for learner differences. Standards that are too high imply "Thou shalt not enter," or "Thou shalt not pass."

Blaming the victim is a phenomenon well enough known among readers who will be able to relate to the notion that is the learner who has to fit in and to change, not the regular class teacher (who otherwise will have to become a special-ordinary teacher). Mainstreaming is destined to fail as long as the learner is held responsible to make up, catch up, and keep up, with age mates. Success is predicated on giving children work that they can do. Failure is predicated on inappropriate goals. The Catch Up Syndrome, or hurry sickness, is the antithesis of mainstreaming. We blame failure on slowness. We are expert blamers, expert complainers and expert failers.

Conventional promotional practices, many unfounded in board policy, prevent most special needs learners from participating in the grade system because of their inability to meet grade requirements. Eventually, some form of courtesy promotion is in use, but not in the dignified sense of having passed, or of being one among fellows. Essentially it is a bastard status which is conferred on those who have not "legitimately graded." One can grade eggs, but not children; label jars, but not failures; and plan success but not prevent it. Is it fair to do otherwise? The fairness question cannot be ignored.

The overriding concern has been how difficult mainstreaming is, rather than how must we change in order to do it. Too much attention has been spent on

fighting the problem vs solving the problem. Too much objection is based on preserving instructional convenience and administrative ease vs pinpointing unique instructional needs and flexible planning.

A problem with successfully mainstreaming is the lack of agreement on what constitutes legitimate learning and legitimate teaching. The question: what are schools really for, leads to a stand-off between the cerebral and visceral, between cognitive and affective and between academic and social. Academic snobbery and intellectual elitism are not new to the profession. There is a traditional bias, with historical prestige, for scholarship. Witness the low persons on the totem pole: the vocational education teacher and the special education teacher ("... works with the dummies.") The legitimate learning issue revolves around subject matter learning vs social interaction learning or formal learning vs self-help skills learning. This is simply education vs training revisited.

Those who claim the school's main consideration should be literacy, have overlooked what Gorman (1972), has stated: "The school is first and foremost a social institution and a social community.... Unless it is a success as a social community it is quite unlikely to be a great success at anything else." Institutions which have made a systematic attempt to apply the concept of community (Jones, 1953), have made sweeping changes in their organization, operating on the basis of two-way communication, agenda building, shared responsibility and decision making through consensus, utilization of the abilities of all, and social interaction as a learning process.

Finally, no discussion of mainstreaming approaches can take place beyond the issue of integration and normalized environments without considering the integration of the more severely handicapped -- both physically and mentally.

Integration takes many forms: namely, token, physical and facilities, building, social, adminstrative/financial, program/curricular and interactional. In many respects this sequence could be viewed as a development model, from tokenism to genericism. The unfortunate aspect of this model is that exceptionalities are seen to exist in the person and further unless and until they can be more "normalized," they are too handicapped to participate in or contribute to otherwise regular programs. What is not realized is that handicap is in the environment, not in the learner. The barrier is in the policy and practices of so-called regular education. Discontinuity, for one, is a major barrier. Special-ordinary (mainstream) education overcomes barriers -- the barrier to universal access to buildings and programs, the barrier between preschool (nursery or day care) and the school, the barrier between special and regular education, the barrier to full integration of handicapped individuals

in the heterogeneous society and the barrier between the school and the work place.

We are masters at segregating, categorizing, labelling, isolating, discriminating, devaluing, dehumanizing. These are formidable barriers to mainstreaming.

What is the answer?

Today we have a broader range of possibilities when we decide to specialize, or stated more accurately, to individualize. Let us examine ways to prothesitize the standard curriculum, adapt instruction, modify the first three R's -- Rules, Rituals, Routines (Reasoner, 1976), organize time, space, and materials, vary rate, duration, and intensity of various tasks. Remember, you are not alone, every teacher with 25, or however many, children in the class, has 25, or however many, assistants. Children make excellent peer tutors to each other or cross-age tutors for children in the lower grades. Be prepared to accept tutors from the more advanced grades as well -- a most necessary lesson in interdependence. For those who cannot read, arrange for them to be read to. For those who cannot write, arrange a secretary for them. For those who cannot calculate, give them a calculator. This thinking is consistent with prothesitizing the environment by providing a ramp, a grab bar, eye glasses, crutches, a wheelchair, hearing aid, braille typewriter, child attendant, teacher aide or whatever is required in removing the "cloak of incompetence," in allowing the child to dictate the curriculum vs the system dictating it. Here, one must accept the assumption that curriculum includes everything that happens to the child at school (Little, 1984).

Special education in the regular classroom is provided in some classrooms by choosing one or more, of six available models, which are well established in individualized instruction -- not to be confused with individual teaching, or a tutoring mode. These models are diagnostic-prescriptive teaching, modularized instruction, nonformal basic programs, learning centres, open experience, commercial programs and materials which include computer assisted learning. (Charles, 1980; Gearheart & Weishahn, 1984; Gronlund, 1974; Hart, 1981; Henson, 1976; Kelly, 1974; Lewis & Dorlag, 1983; Segal, 1969; Smith, 1985; Stephens, 1982; Wood, 1984).

There is no scarcity of information on or examples of, mainstreaming methods and practices, which demonstrate the viability of integrating the disabled into regular classes. Of course the regular teacher (now the special-ordinary teacher) must feel comfortable in asking for assistance and in trying the recommendations offered (Gearheart, 1980, p.60). By assisting the child in

the regular classroom, it is assumed that there will be greater transfer and maintenance than if programming is provided only in a special setting.

Groden, et al, (1985) report the benefits of a prereferral intervention system which is based on a consultative approach to service delivery and provides intervention assistance to regular classroom teachers, providing needed classroom support and assistance, thereby reducing inappropriate placements in special education outside the ordinary classroom. Their findings showed dramatically altered traditional practices (cf. p.493) and significant declines in testing and placement rates. The challenge is to develop and implement in-class service delivery systems (individualized approaches) that help teachers teach more effectively (p.495). This is reminiscent of Lloyd Dunn's comment at a conference in Saskatchewan some years ago: "You find 'em; You fix 'em where you find 'em!"

Goodman (1985) has written at length about the Effective Schools Movement and Special Education. This American education development is deeply concerned about the isolation of special education teachers and children from communication and interaction with regular class teachers. Regular education in the U.S.A. is in the throes of what has become known as the Effective Schools Movement. Its practices are generic in nature, being applied across various classrooms, subject areas, and regular and special populations. It identifies "best practices" from which all teachers and learners can benefit. The question is, are these practices, to a large extent, already part of the special educator's repertoire? Why is special education in general lacking evidence of instructional and programmatic effectiveness? (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982).

Increasing the effectiveness of regular education programs for underachieving students in general, will lessen the pressure on special education to absorb increasing numbers of referrals in L.D., E.M.R., and B.C. classes. Goodman(1985, p.102) asks, "Can we deny special education classes have been used inappropriately as the placement alternative for far too many underachieving and or disruptive exceptional children?" Her answer is that regular education can and must learn to deal with the needs of its non-handicapped (but exceptional) problem learners, while special education must refocus its efforts and resources on the truly handicapped. It is probably fair to say the tendency has been to place students in special classes as a substitute for developing other programs in the ordinary class, for moving to a genuinely mainstreamed classroom. The writer acknowledges that we must beware of "educators' efforts (at wholesale mainstreaming) as anything more than a belated attempt to right past wrongs." This is not to gainsay that special education in the regular classroom is a realistic alternative to present separatist practices.

Segal, as far back as 1969, expressed doubts as to the reliability, validity, and advisability of special class treatment for many learning difficulties -- especially in relation to those who are minimally handicapped. He points out nine basic problems of learning (cf. Ch.3), with techniques for solving them.

1. poor self concept/low self esteem ("I am one who cannot.")
2. anxiety (fear of failure, achievement neurosis)
3. difficulty in paying attention (restless, hyper, hypo)
4. difficulty in organizing (forgets, loses things, untidy)
5. difficulty in copying written material
6. poor coordination (clumsy, messy)
7. difficulty in abstract thinking
8. behavioral problems (refusals, noisy, rough, shy, etc.)
9. social immaturity (cries, whines, dependent, silly, etc.)

Think of as many basic problems of teachers as possible. Yes, we can be a problem, too. (We have to acknowledge our characteristics, behaviour and influence.)

It would do well to remember:

1. Students will have had little experience in making choices.
2. Take small steps and begin with only one area of phase or your teaching.
3. Develop the habit of holding class meetings (We have something to learn from them. Feedback is a two-way street.)
4. Begin some self-scheduling for one time block a day.
5. All students will not be ready or able to adjust themselves to some of all aspects of an individual learning classroom. (I.L.C.)
6. The skills needed to work in an I.L.C. must be taught or practised in the same way other subject area skills are taught and practised.
7. A few setbacks do not mean you are a failure, or the process is unworkable.
8. Children will work for what is meaningful to them; try contracting with them.
9. At times it will be necessary to pull in the reins and set up tighter limits and standards.
10. Continue consultation with the class -- make opportunities for the class to share and discuss their frustration, concerns, failures, successes.

Overall think small and move slowly. These points should assist you in your mainstreaming decisions.

Summary

This paper has proposed the necessity for examining the schools' present stance on the process of mainstreaming, which is typically interlocked with the context of the LRE (Least Restrictive Environment). One must rethink the or normalization and integration as it is now applied in mainstreaming decisions which foster the teaching-learning of the handicapped and with their non-handicapped peers. On the whole in this country, we are not mainstreaming, we are mainstreeting. With a smile and a firm handshake we try to create an image of doing everything we can for the disabled. We talk politics, make promises, put up smoke screening, and avoid the basic problem of learning to live together in total communion with a community of learners who are being discriminated against because of their differences. Mainstreaming is the promise of something better.

To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, it is not that mainstreaming has been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried. It is not a matter of having all the answers but of whether we are ready to commit ourselves, commit ourselves to the change process in creating a sense of community out of accepted differences. Community equals communication. Communication equals interaction. Interaction equals integration. Integration equals normalization. Normalization equals mainstreaming. Mainstreaming equals community. And so on.

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One system, one purpose:
The integration of special and regular education

William Stainback and Susan Stainback

"Hopefully, by the year 2000 there will be no more special education but only an education system that serves all children" (Forest, 1985, p.40).

Over a century ago, a system of specialized education was developed to meet the needs of children considered somehow "exceptional" or "special." Although designed to be part of the system of regular education, special education has grown into what has, in fact, become a whole system on its own. It has its own pupils, teachers, supervisory staff and funding mechanisms. There have been attempts to blur the parallel lines between the regular and special systems in recent years, but the separation remains. The very idea first developed to enhance children with special needs may now be the very concept that is doing them harm.

Maintaining a dual system of education presents several problems. First, it is unfair. By assigning some students to "special" education, we exclude them from "regular" education status and psychologically and physically separate them from their peers. Appropriate educational programs and related services should be provided to **all** students as a regular or standard practice in public schools. As noted by a leading scholar in education (Biklen, 1985); "Until accommodation for the disabled is seen as regular, normal and expected, it will be seen instead as special. As long as it is special, it will be, by definition, unequal" (p.176).

Operating a dual system of education is also inefficient. First, the dual system has resulted in a breakdown in professional communication and a waste of educational resources through the separation and frequent duplication of educational services. There are agencies, organizations, divisions or offices of special and regular education which generally do not cooperate or share in the use of personnel, materials, equipment or the development and operation of accounting, monitoring and funding mechanisms. As pointed out by Edwin Martin (1978), former Deputy U.S. Commissioner of Education, this separation "has lead to the treatment of common problems by separate groups who use different language constructs, publish in different journals and, in general, cannot communicate" (p.iv).

A second level of inefficiency inherent in the dual system involves the

expensive need to classify students to determine who belongs in which system. A great deal of time, money and effort are currently spent trying to determine who is "regular" and who is "special" and what type or category of exceptionality fits each special student. This continues to be done in spite of the fact that both professional opinion and research indicate that classification is often done unreliably. It stereotypes students, provides little instructional value, and actually functions to deny some students access to services and programs needed to enhance their educational progress (Reynolds & Birch, 1982).

One way to solve the problems created by maintaining two systems of education would be to merge special and regular education into one unified system structured to meet the unique needs of all students. A merger involves the incorporation of all the resources and services (e.g., funding, curriculum, personnel) from both regular and special education into a single unified educational system. Under such an organizational structure, eligibility for any of the system's resources and services would be based on the specific interests, needs and capabilities of each student rather than a special or regular designation or any other assigned categorical affiliation.

There are a number of practical advantages to a merger.

1. All students could be approached as individuals and provided with educational programs and related services based on their unique educational profiles. For example, if a student's assessment profile indicates a need for individualized assistance and practice in certain math, reading or motor skills, or classes in English, history, self-care skills or braille, the student could receive the classes or services appropriate for his or her age range without the necessity of being classified and labelled. This would save the schools considerable resources which are now wasted by classifying and labelling students. More importantly, students we currently give special labels would be saved from subjection to the de-individualizing and stereotyping impact of pity-evoking labels like "retarded", "disturbed" or "disordered". Students would be assured of equal access to all classes and services if they need them.

2. With a merger, all school personnel would be brought together into a more cohesive, integrated system of education. There would be no special and regular educators, just educators -- each with his or her own interests and areas of specialization (e.g., reading, math, sign language, vocational programming, science). This could help reduce much of the conflict that occurs between special and regular educators concerning resources and who is responsible for what. Educators should share their expertise and pool their resources in order to get maximum "mileage" from their instructional efforts. A merger could facilitate this.

3. The needs of all students could be better and more effectively met in a merged system of education rather than in the present dual system. By regular and special educators joining forces, the resources and talents currently invested in the duplication of services and classifying and offered as an integral part of the educational system rather than as a "special" accommodation. As a result, students who needed instruction in these areas could become a more integrated part of the educational mainstream. That is, they would not have to be classified as "special" and assigned to a "special" system of education with "special" personnel in order to receive instructional programs and services that meet their needs.

4. Personnel preparation, certification and assignment could be organized according to areas of instructional expertise (e.g., individualized and adaptive learning approaches, motor skill development, self-care/community living, or alternative communication methods). As a consequence, school personnel could specialize in instructional areas rather than categories of "deviant" students with certification and job assignment focussed on specific areas of instructional expertise. This could help make the preparation of teachers and other school personnel (who have traditionally been trained according to categories of deviant students) more functional and instructionally relevant. For example, educators could be offered a common base including basic philosophies and processes of teaching and learning required to meet student needs.

   Specializations focussing on a teacher's interests and abilities in instructional content areas such as reading, math, self-help/community living skills, braille, or language arts, could be offered as options for specialization to prospective or practising teachers. This would provide training, certification and job assignment in all areas of expertise needed to meet all students' instructional needs. This type of reorganization would not only serve to de-emphasize the categorical group approach to teacher preparation and assignment (Dybwad, 1983), but would also provide an organizational structure in which students in the public schools would have access to personnel resources in particular instructional areas where they need educational programming. That is, if a student requires programming in language arts, he or she could be assigned to a teacher with specialized training in that area. Or, if daily living skills training is needed, a student could be assigned to a course taught by an instructor with expertise in teaching those skills. Thus, teacher assignment could be based on the age range and instructional needs of students rather than by segregation into special and regular classes that are often not directly relevant to student learning needs.

5. By merging special and regular education services, advocacy and funding for educational services could be made more normalized and relevant to student needs. Rather than continue to seek "child-in-category" funding, advocates could lobby to have funds earmarked to facilitate research, training, resources and services in instructional areas in which deficits are noted. For instance, we could lobby to have monies allocated for research and development, personnel and resources in areas such as self-help/community living skills, motor skill development, sign language, speech, reading and competitive employment training. This is already done when a need is identified in instructional areas such as math or science. Likewise, we could lobby for funds, adequate training for school personnel and other resources for making school programs more flexible and individualized to meet the needs of all students. By doing this, it would no longer be necessary to lobby for "special" programs accessible only to certain categories of students.

   An alternative way of advocating is important since advocating by categories of students for special school programs ultimately leads to the division of school personnel, students and programs along those categorical lines and into special and regular programs in the public school. This works against viewing all students as individuals and integral members of the same "regular" student body.

The issue is not whether there are differences among students that can be classified or whether students need different educational programs and services, but rather the question is: should we classify and assign students to different systems or education? It is neither appropriate nor necessary to maintain two systems to offer all students the educational programs and related services needed to meet their unique needs. The existence of individual differences among students should not be used as a justification to label, segregate or maintain a dual system of education. As noted by Gilhool (1964) -- with careful planning it should be possible to meet the unique needs of all students within one unified system of education -- a system that does not deny differences, but rather a system that recognizes, celebrates and accommodates differences.

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Integration: Being realistic isn't realistic

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An increasing amount of pressure is being put on school boards to integrate students with physical and mental handicaps into the regular classroom, and thus teachers, principals, and those within the educational hierarchy are facing a dilemma to which there seem to be no easy answers. The primary concern which confronts these educators is which children should be placed in segregated settings -- whether in segregated schools or in segregated classes within the regular school. Even within the field of special education, there is a wide range of ideologies as to whether integration or segregation serves the best interests of the child.

On one end of the ideological spectrum, there is the view that segregation always benefits the child regardless of the particular disability. Yet such a view is usually seen as outdated and somewhat defeatist in that it does not allow the child the chance to become integrated into the regular classroom. On the other hand, there is the view that integration always serves the best interest of the child and that all the segregated schools and classes should be disbanded. However, this view is usually seen as being idealistic and not facing the unique needs of this special child.

As a result, many principals and teachers often find themselves in the position where they must decide whether to integrate or segregate the exceptional child given his or her particular needs and capabilities. The central issue confronting these educators is, when is integration realistic and when is integration not realistic? With respect to this question, I have a definite view: **Integration is not realistic, and that is precisely why we should integrate.** But before we can explore this somewhat confusing statement, it is important to examine the context in which this phrase is usually used.

The term, "not realistic" has been used so often in discussions of the educational placement of an exceptional child that the meaning of the actual term has become obscure and somewhat of a cliché. Moreover, the validity of using this term has gone largely unchallenged. It is vital, therefore, that we take time to examine the implications of our own language and define precisely what we mean when we decide that something is "not realistic."

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In trying to decide whether to integrate an exceptional student, the discussion inevitably focuses on evaluating the child's limitations. In some cases, the child's limitations are so severe that it seems impossible for that child to participate in many of the school's activities.

The tendency, therefore, is not to integrate the child, for what seems to be valid reasons. Yet, although the decision may appear "realistic," often these very sensible conclusions deny the child the opportunity to discover a way in which he or she could successfully integrate into the regular class. Thus, the question of what is realistic isn't as clear cut as it may seem.

Realism and defeatism

Differentiating between the situations when one is being realistic and when one is being a defeatist is often very difficult, and the difference is crucial. If a student does not try out for the school football team because he feels he is too light, is he being realistic or being a defeatist? When an exceptional child is being integrated into a school, the whereabouts of this thin line between realism and defeatism is constantly in question. Unfortunately, it is often easier to say, "It's just not realistic."

A vivid example of a time when I fell into the mire of defeatism under the guise of "being realistic," happened when a friend of mine, who also had cerebral palsy, tried to get his driver's license. At that time, I had already passed the necessary tests and had received my license. My friend, no doubt inspired by the fact that I could now drive around instead of taking the bus, told me that he intended to try for his license. I said -- and here it comes -- that it wasn't realistic because his right foot was too slow to make an emergency stop. I am sure that anyone would have made the same comment. (It should be noted that hand controls were of no use to my friend as he only had the use of his right arm.) Undaunted, he took driving lessons but unfortunately failed the examination because his right foot reflexes were too slow. Although I outwardly sympathized with him, I admit that underneath I thought it was all for the better -- not to mention that I was a bit proud that my prediction had come true. My pride was shattered when he drove up in a car which had an additional accelerator on the left side of the brake. His right side was handicapped, not his left side. With this one adaptation, it was possible for him to operate the accelerator and the brake with his left foot, and as a result he could drive as well and as safely as anyone else.

This episode raised an important question for me: how many times have we prevented a handicapped person from figuring out a way of overcoming a problem simply by saying, "It is not realistic." We have no intention of being

defeatist, just as I had no such thought when I advised by friend not to drive. Indeed, most people think, as I did, that they were acting in the best interests of the person.

The incident with my friend incited my curiosity about the hidden reasons which prompt us to eagerly announce that a given task is not "realistic" for certain students. Many of my initial predictions about the underlying motivations were validated in numerous discussions with teachers and principals across Ontario. Here are a few of the more common latent reasons.

Honest ignorance

For many teachers, the thought of having a student with a physical handicap or a mental handicap in their class seems like a completely unrealistic proposition if not a terrifying nightmare. Yet, these same teachers are often unaware of the possible minor adaptations which could be made in the classroom to accommodate the exceptional student. Thus, the statement, "not realistic," is often a reflection of honest ignorance. However, in deciding that a certain task is "not realistic," the speaker immediately minimizes the opportunity to brainstorm about the possible ways of overcoming a specific problem. Moreover, in committing oneself to the view that integrating a certain student is "not realistic," one immediately makes a judgment about that situation and now has a vested interest in maintaining the validity of that judgment.

These problems, however, can be easily sidestepped by making statements which are more congruent with the speaker's actual concern. Rather than concluding that integrating a certain student is "not realistic" for now and evermore, if we identify the specific concerns we have, such as taking notes, two different curricula in the class, etc., and indicate that overcoming these problems would make integrating this student a plausible idea, then the previously mentioned issues disappear. By focussing on the specific problems and encouraging possible solutions, the staff, the students and the exceptional child become immediately engaged in the process of trying to create ways of overcoming certain obstacles. The shop class, for example, may become involved in designing a desk which may allow the paper to be clamped to the desk, making note-taking easier for the student. Moreover, in focusing on the specific problems and not making grand conclusions, no one is proven wrong when new ideas are presented. Thus, simply the way we express our concerns can dramatically affect the educational opportunities for an exceptional child.

Fear of failure

Another latent motivation for declaring that integration is "not realis-

tic" is fear of failure. The principal or teacher may be concerned that an unsuccessful attempt to integrate a certain student may be more detrimental than if the student were not integrated at all. Yet there is a more subtle fear of failure involved in this statement. There is the fear that if I, the teacher, fail at integrating this child, what will my principal think of me? What will the other teachers think of me? What will I think of my own ability as a teacher, **especially** if I am a special education teacher?

In this situation, however, it is vital that we examine the implications of our language. **To retreat from the possibility of failure is to retreat from the experience of learning itself.** It must be remembered that education is a process, not a product. Failure is the essential factor within the process of education that makes learning possible. For students, education becomes a product, a tangible result, usually consisting of a letter, number, or red checkmark. Ultimately, the issue is how we help students to appreciate the **process** of learning rather than becoming consumed by the **product** of learning.

Although many teachers recognize this issue in their own classes, relatively few teachers appreciate this same discrepancy between process and product when it rears its obstinate head in the area of integration. Integrating an exceptional student into a regular classroom is itself a learning experience, and as such it must be defined as a process, not a product. Too often, "successful integration" is defined as a product, an end result in which "successful" means that **all** of the problems of integration have been triumphantly conquered such that exceptional students are a blissful addendum to the school program. Those who have integrated exceptional students into a regular classroom know that such a conception of integration is a fantasy. In terms of integration, "successful" refers to the **process** by which a student is integrated into the class. Successfully integrating a student means that there is a common commitment among the staff, students, and the exceptional student, to finding new ways of overcoming obstacles which inevitably and continuously arise. Moreover, when the child does initially fail at a certain task, rather than re-examining the feasibility of integration , there is a common interest among all who are involved in what can be learned by this failure. A child's failure to accomplish a task will always provide new information which was not present before the child failed. The question is, are the staff and the students looking for that new information and, if so, are they able to incorporate that new information in modifying the subsequent ideas on how the child might accomplish that same task? In this way, then, the term "successful" refers to the attitude of the staff and the process by which attempts are made to integrate the exceptional student rather than tangible products or outcomes.

Limited time and energy

In many cases, teachers agree with the philosophy of integration but claim that they would not accept an exceptional child into their class simply because they feel that they don't have the time and energy to give the child the special attention he/she needs. They often do not have the time or the energy to integrate an exceptional student into their class. The question is, though, where does the majority of the teacher's time and energy go?

If one seriously considers where the majority of a teacher's time and energy goes, one realizes that the majority does not go into actually teaching the class. Rather, huge amounts of time and energy are devoted to dealing with discipline problems. From the day we enter Teachers' College, possibly from the day we enter Grade 1, we learn that dealing with discipline problems is a major part of a teacher's role in life. The assumption that a teacher **must** devote a great deal of time and energy to dealing with uncooperative students is a habit which we unquestionably validate and call necessary. If one then tries to challenge the validity of these assumptions, one must not challenge only the assumption itself but must also challenge the environment physical entities create around the assumption.

This example, then, brings to light the fact that insufficient time and energy is not the real issue; the crucial question is which students have priority on the teacher's time and energy in today's school system? Students who have discipline problems have been accepted into the regular class and, as a result, teachers put forward a great deal of effort trying to educate them. Exceptional children, if they're fortunate, are granted whatever time is left over. Our own habits and unchallenged assumptions are the greatest barrier to integration.

Fear of social rejection

In some cases, the underlying motivation of claiming that integration is "not realistic" is the feat that the exceptional child will not be socially accepted by the other students. Often, teachers and principals become extremely concerned that the other students will tease, imitate or mock the exceptional student. This, they feel, may be more detrimental to the child than if he or she had not been integrated at all. Yet, it is not the actual handicap that causes the teasing, it is the other kids' ATTITUDE toward the handicap. If a teacher is so willing to segregate at the first sign of social discrimination, one wonders about how different that teacher's attitude is from the kids who do the teasing. The teacher just expresses this fear differently. The point is, if we have students in our schools who have poor attitudes toward handicapped individuals, are we challenging or perpetrating those attitudes by segregating

handicapped students?

There is, however, a further reason to integrate exceptional students into regular schools. Tomorrow's doctors, nurses, teachers, clerks and most importantly, tomorrow's parents of handicapped children are in our schools today. It is a moral crime that, in our society, we allow individuals to grow up not knowing what cerebral palsy or mental disability are until they are told by a doctor on the floor of a maternity ward. We have a moral obligation, not only to the exceptional child, but to the future parents of exceptional children to strive towards complete integration in our schools.

There are many reasons why integration is "not realistic":

- we have not discovered all the ways of including an exceptional student in a regular class;
- there is the possibility that the whole attempt may be a failure;
- teachers certainly do not have the time or energy to deal with an exceptional student in their class;
- there may be a great deal of social discrimination towards the exceptional child.

Yet it is precisely because integration is not realistic in all of these ways that we **should** integrate. In fact, when you hear the term "not realistic" several questions should immediately come to mind:

- How am I honestly ignorant of many of the ways in which minor adaptations could be made in my class to accommodate an exceptional child in my class?
- Am I preventing myself from learning about integration because I am afraid of the possibility of failure?
- What students am I allowing to have priority on my time and energy?
- Am I challenging or perpetrating the existing attitude in the school by segregating exceptional students?

Will the real handicapped person please stand up

What should be evident at this point in the discussion is that how we act is determined by what we believe. And what we believe is reflected in our language and the way we define words. Let me illustrate this by showing how the way we define two common words can dramatically affect the way we behave. The two words are "situation" and "problem."

With respect to integration, difficulties usually arise as a result of a **problem** coming into conflict with the **situation.** Typically, the term **situation** is defined as having 35 students in the class to whom you must teach a given curriculum in a given amount of time. The **problem** is that two weeks into the school year, your principal walks into your class and says, "Surprise, we've

got a new kid for you. He's mentally retarded, has cerebral palsy, blind, auditory learning disability, autistic, and we're not sure, but he may be epileptic. Have fun!" Thus, the child becomes a **problem**. And once the child becomes the problem, the question is, "How do we fix the problem?"

By changing our definitions, an entire new set of factors comes into play. We can define the **situation** as having 36 students in the class -- one of whom has special needs -- and a given curriculum to cover in a given amount of time. The **problem** is that the school system has never been set up to accommodate an exceptional child in the regular class. Consequently, rather than focussing on the child's handicap and trying to muster up all the resource people to work with the child, we become aware of how the environment around the child is handicapped and how it is equally, if not more, important to focus the resources on these less obvious handicaps. Rather than asking, "How do we fix the child?" we begin asking, "How is the school building handicapped? How can we get elevators and ramps built?" But more importantly, we begin to ask, "How are the other students handicapped in terms of their attitudes towards disabled children? Can we get a speaker to come in and talk about different disabilities and society's attitude towards them?" But perhaps the most threatening question is, "How am I, the teacher, handicapped, and how does my handicap interfere with my ability to work with the child?" Perhaps the teacher appears quite comfortable with children who have a physical or mental handicap. But the sight of excessive drooling, self-stimulating behaviour, or unwarranted screaming, may initiate a strong internal panic or fear of the child. There may be a sense of being repulsed by the child, or these behaviours may even cause the teacher to withdraw from, or even dislike, the child. All of these initial reactions are normal responses given that exceptional individuals have been hidden from our view in the past, only shown in exhibitions and horror movies. Nevertheless, the strong internal reactions of panic, fear and repulsion, are as much a handicap as the unusual behaviour of the child. Consequently, we must not only recognize the child's handicap and other students' handicaps, we must also recognize our own handicap and seek out resources to help the teachers rather than concentrating only on the exceptional child.

Mr. Jim Hansen is a superintendent of the Hamilton Roman Catholic Separate School Board in Ontario. They have a completely integrated program. If you push him hard enough, he will admit that he has one or two segregated classes, "But," he quickly points out, "we don't segregate because of the child's handicap, we segregate because we as a school system haven't figured out how to incorporate this child into the regular class. But don't worry, we'll get there." Jim Hansen's words raise an important question: "Do we segregate because of the severity of the child's handicap or do we segregate because of the severity of the school system's handicap?"

In the best interest of the child

Finally, our discussion must address the most controversial aspect of integration: whether integration really does serve the best interests of the child or whether, in some cases, the child's needs are better met in a segregated setting.

If we are to assess a child's "needs," then it is essential to examine all of the needs of that child. I often view a child as a circle. One quarter of that circle has to do with the child's academic learning such as reading, writing, math, etc. The other three quarters of the circle refers to the child's social education, learning how to interact with his or her peers in an age-appropriate fashion. As we know, children learn by imitating the role models which they see.

A segregated setting, though it may have an excellent academic program, can fulfill only one quarter of the child's educational needs. The child has no hope of learning appropriate social behavior because he is never even given the opportunity to witness age-appropriate behavior. In fact, because most students assigned to segregated classes exhibit inappropriate behavior, it is probably that the child's social behaviour will regress rather than progress.

For many years I wrestled with the question of whether segregation could, in some cases, better meet the needs of a child. I read research, weighed all the arguments, but still could not reach a definite conclusion. Then, when I was 23, an incident took place that dramatically affected my beliefs about integration.

In 1981, I was employed to teach a sailing course for disabled individuals. In an attempt to recruit new students, we visited several segregated living accommodations for people with a physical handicap. When we entered one "facility," I recognized a young woman whom I shall refer to as Shelly. Shelly and I had come to know each other while we were in a segregated public school and had became close friends. She had cerebral palsy, and was an intelligent, perceptive girl who had a dry and biting sense of humour. Together we had talked about what it was like to be handicapped, we laughed about how people reacted to us, and shared many of the common pains and frustrations.

After completing Grade 7, I was integrated into a regular school and from there continued on into a secondary school, and then entered university. Shelly had continued her education in various segregated settings, eventually moving into a segregated residence. Shelly and I had parted when we were both 13 years old. I had not seen Shelly for ten years since that time. Consequently, I was overjoyed to see Shelly again. I sat down and began talking with her.

In five minutes I painfully realized that Shelly was still 13 years old.

At that moment, the connection between segregation and death became apparent. Although Shelly was breathing and talking, and was biologically functioning, it was clear that Shelly had died at 13. Granted, she was involved with physiotherapy, speech therapy, and recreational therapy. But life does not consist of walking better, talking better, or being able to swim. Life consists of facing the challenges which confront you in the world beyond "the facility." Moreover, life consists of having the ability to choose how one is to live their life. One only learns to face challenges by actually facing challenges. Likewise, one only gains the ability to choose if one is given the opportunity to choose. In any segregated setting, life gets handed to the person on a silver platter. And the paradox is that when life gets handed to you on a silver platter, you die.

As I drove home that night, one question burned in my mind: Why am I here and Shelly there when, ten years ago, we had equal abilities? What happened? And as I thought back to the time when I was integrated into a regular school, I remembered meeting with the Vice-Principal, Mr. Bremner, about the possibility of my entering his school. Mr. Bremner met with the board, which was extremely apprehensive about integrating me. Following the board meeting, Mr. Bremner met with me and said, "If you want to go for it, I'll back you up."

I never realized the implications of Mr. Bremner's words until the night I was driving home after seeing Shelly. Mr. Bremner took a chance that he did not necessarily have to take. He took a risk which, technically speaking, was politically unwise and dangerous. And remembering Mr. Bremner's words humbled me because I began to ask myself, "How much is my being in university a result of a decision that a vice-principal made ten years ago?" But that memory also scared me because I began to wonder where I might be now if I hadn't met Mr. Bremner. Would I have been like Shelly? I had Bremner, and I won. Chance, rather than our abilities, had determined our futures.

But what about the new Normans and the new Shellys coming up through the system? Whom will they meet? Will they meet Bremners? More importantly, what will you, the teacher or principal, say when they meet you?

In the education business, professional distance is seen as an asset. Educators are encouraged to be objective so as to make more "realistic" and rational decisions than the parents who become "too emotionally involved" with the child. But if that same teacher or principal was the parent of that child, what would they want for their child? First, they would love their child very deeply. Secondly, they would want their child to maximize his or her full

potential. And thirdly, they would want their child to be able to live in society after they were gone. The most challenging question that educators have to confront is, "Are the decisions that you are making as an educator the same decisions you would want to be made if you were a parents of an exceptional child?

If we are honest, we must admit that integration is not an educational issue. Integration is a political issue. If we are to succeed at incorporating exceptional students into the regular class, it is essential that we have the moral and political support of teachers and principals.

If, however, you believe that segregation can, in some cases, better meet the best interests of the child, then I would like to offer you a few thoughts:

1. Have you ever visited a segregated school knowing the capabilities of the individual children?

2. Segregation is often justified by the need to lower academic standards so as to meet the child on their level. One must ask, however, "Where will the child go after he or she graduates? What are we educating him or her FOR?"

3. Often, it is said that segregated settings permit a lower teacher-student ratio thus providing a better chance for the child to develop his or her social skills. Yet, some research in this (Certo & Haring, 1983) has concluded that segregated settings teach the child to interact with adults, not with peers.

I firmly believe that every teacher or principal is capable of being another Bremner. The only factor which might hinder them will be their own assumptions and their own fears. In this discussion, we have closely examined many of the assumptions which hinder our professional creativity. Let us briefly look at the issue of fear.

The process of integrating an exceptional child is often thwarted by a teacher's or principal's fear of handicapped children. Yet, the only reason why educators are afraid of handicapped children is because they have never been exposed to handicapped children. The only way educators will be able to overcome their fear is if handicapped children are integrated into the regular schools, which is unlikely, as educators are afraid of handicapped children.

At some point, this vicious circle has to be broken by an educator who admits a fear of children with handicaps yet still decides to integrate handi-

capped children. For some reason, educators have not been given permission to be afraid. Yet, the only way one can overcome one's fears is to work through the fear.

The danger does not lie in being afraid. The danger arises when we hide our fear behind academic arguments. For those arguments then become myths and soon other people hide their fear behind the same myth.

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Keys to integration:
Common sense ideas and hard work

Marsha Forest

Why do we always take a simple concept and make it so difficult and complicated? Take integration for instance. If all the children in any given community went to school together and each child had his or her unique needs met within a regular school setting, what would be the a big fuss? Recently, I spoke to over 130 high school students who grasped this concept right away. One young woman raised her hand and said, "Dr. Forest, it makes so much sense, why didn't we do it before?" I often wonder the same thing.

It takes no genius and no degree in psychology to recognize the child who is a music or art prodigy, or the child with challenging learning needs. Common sense can tell us who needs the curriculum adaptations and modifications. Do we really need IQ tests and other tools to tell us what we can see with the naked eye?

We have created a monster called Special Education, and in spite of massive educational research by the leaders in the field (Dunn, Blatt, Biklen, Lusthaus, Lilly, Stainback and Stainback, Brown, etc.) that tells us that special education is neither "special nor in many cases educational" we still carry on with a proliferation of new labels and new classes and new groups.

Along with the Stainbacks (entourage, Summer 1986) I agree that it is time to end the "apartheid" system of education that purports to serve children labelled "mentally handicapped." We need and must fight for one education system that serves the needs of all children in their regular classes along with their brothers and sisters.

Does this mean a child with challenging needs sits in the classroom all day? Does it mean dumping the child in the back of the class? Does it mean physical integration with a shadow aide following the child around like a policeman all day? Surely not. I am sick of professionals who turn my words around for their own meanings. I'm talking about good education -- this means individualizing programs, creative problem-solving and effective teaching for everyone.

Why is it that some school boards can integrate and others can't? If a board doesn't know how, why don't they ask us? We didn't know much five years

ago but now there is a core of people all over this country that can help any school board to integrate any child, no matter the intensity of that child's needs.

We do not dump... we educate. I can tell you why and where and how each hour of a child's day is spent and give an educational rationale for placement and program. I challenge anyone to show us why it cannot be done. I see it being done beautifully in three school boards in Ontario -- Hamilton-Wentworth, Wellington County and Waterloo County Separate School Boards. What do they have that others don't? It's simple -- they have Jim Hansen, Joe Waters and George Flynn, three top administrators who care, who believe in education for **all** children, and who have the guts to stand up for what is right for children.

Recently, I was in a debate in Ottawa with the director of a large and rich board of education. I was embarrassed by his sexism, his attitudes towards people with a handicap and his arrogance. He accused me and the Integration Action Group of being "political," of being "advocates" and of being "emotional." Darn right, and we're proud of it! One brave parent stood up and asked him what choices parents had if the board didn't agree with what they wanted. "Should we lie down and die?" he asked. "I guess you have no other route," the director admitted quietly. He left after he spoke and didn't even have the courtesy to stay for the discussion period that followed.

As was clear at this heated meeting, it is not parents vs professionals, but some parents and professionals vs other parents and professionals -- it is two value systems in conflict. It is old ideas vs new ideas. It is the old world of mental retardation and charity and telethons, and pity and guilt vs a new world of challenge and children and rights and advocacy and information and knowledge.

That evening in Ottawa, I was also accused of preaching love and magic cures. I'll admit to preaching love, but the magic cures are based on very hard work, intensive study and analysis of real problems and thus real solutions. No magic at all. Very understandable.

Love, to me, means hard work, struggle and tears as well as smiles. Love is being vulnerable and open to hurt. Love is also not always neat and clean and tidy and full of violins and roses. Love is also, however, great joy and great sharing.

I talk of love in the spirit of friendship and relationships and building communities where friends trust one another and where back stabbing and jealousy do not exist. If I love someone, I want to see that this person has the

very best and I will fight hard to ensure that my friend is safe and secure and well cared for. If that person is my child, I want that child to have the right to the very best.

In 1987, it is time to say that the best in education means regular classroom placement for all children with appropriate programs and supports. If we can send a man or woman to the moon, surely we can put a child into the real world of school and figure out a proper program. It is so silly that grown men and women with many degrees and titles and big salaries constantly ask me, with arrogance and anger, "Well, Dr. Forest, you just tell us how to educate that severely to profoundly, behaviourally disordered sick psychotic child in a regular setting..." Of course they don't want the reply, they don't wait for the reply.

A real live case in point: Jaclyn Rowett is the lovely and bright daughter of Ian and Verlyn Rowett. A delightful young couple -- he's a social worker and she's a mom who drives school buses. They have two children. Jaclyn happens to have an extra chromosome. For this reason, they just spent $20,000 in legal fees to convince the York Region Public School Board to accept her in her neighbourhood school. They lost. The board insists Jaclyn attend a segregated class in Joseph A. Gibson School which is 19 km away from their home. Jaclyn skates, takes ballet, plays the piano and attends Brownies with her friends. Jaclyn also reads, writes and uses a computer.

I recently visited Jaclyn at the Children's College Private School in Woodbridge, Ont. She is doing great. Her teachers accept her without question and the other kids see her as just another kid. So what's the big deal?

If Jaclyn was Catholic and lived in Hamilton, Kitchener or Guelph, she would be in her home school without an aide, doing just fine in the second or third grade. Therefore, it is not Jaclyn who has the problem, it is the school board. It needs the help, not Jaclyn. This is injustice, pure and simple. It is ignorance and prejudice on the part of the school board and just plain old-fashioned unfair.

It shouldn't be so hard but it is. It is hard for any minority group to fight their way into the system. But fighting and standing on principle do wonders for the soul. The Rowetts may be $20,000 poorer, but they stand with their heads held high and their daughter and son know they have parents who think both their children are special, valuable and worth the struggle.

I am frustrated by those who want an easy formula and package or a magic wand solution to this issue. It is part of what I call the "microwave menta-

lity." Oh yes, we want integration -- let's put it in the microwave and set the dial and **voilà,** integration by microwave magic.

Sorry, but it just won't cook. The formula isn't a ready-in-minutes microwave solution because we're dealing with massive bureaucracies, high priced administrators and old-fangled ideas based on fear, ignorance and superstition. It won't change fast because we're still in the grip of some in the medical profession who would abort children with Down Syndrome, starve babies with spina bifida and sterilize the adult with challenging needs. The medical model is alive and well -- if we can't cure your child let us hide him or her in a separate box so he or she won't contaminate the rest of us more perfect beings.

Ordinary people and most teachers see through this deception. A good teacher can teach anyone and can create environments where all children can learn to their fullest potential. This we know. The good news is that integrated settings are on the increase all across the country.

Amber Svingen, who made the Winnipeg School District look foolish, is thriving in a small, creative Jewish school in Winnipeg. If she does well there, why can't her neighbourhood school deal with her? A good, quality, caring school system will welcome all children. Visitors from all over the world flock to our model programs to see for themselves that integration can work and that money isn't the issue -- commitment and values are the key. In all of this we have learned one important lesson. It is the children themselves who are the heroes. They have not yet learned to fear and hate. They still want to help and care and be friends. It is Amber and Catherine, Devon and Trevor, Michael and Caitlin, Maria and Felicia, Lizzie and Susie and Raman and all the kids from coast to coast who, by their very presence make us re-evaluate what we are doing to all our children.

My friend Jason recently taught me an important lesson. He has spent most of his life in institutions, group homes and developmental centres. He flaps his arms and makes noises. He is short for 15 and has a strange haircut.

In spite of much opposition from the local school principal, Jason and three other students were welcomed by a truly caring and knowledgeable teacher into a new life in a real high school. They took a small room and turned it into a lounge area with a computer, a sofa, books, magazines and posters of all the "in" teenage stars. It is not the TR room or the life skills room. It is room 103 -- a lounge area.

The teacher started to invite the other students in to build a "circle of friends" around Jason. By November, Jason was wearing the school uniform, was

attending classes and assemblies surrounded by popular girls and the male "jocks." His "weird" behaviour has diminished and he is taking on the regular craziness of all teenagers. No, he is not cured... he is just becoming who he really is -- Jason. I don't know how far he'll go. I'm not a fortune teller or a witch -- I'm just a teacher.

Jason broke through the blockade of hatred with his unbridled and unsophisticated love of real people and his new friends. The principal of the school now openly admits he was wrong. He is a wise man. To admit a mistake also takes courage. He changed and I believe most people can change. Those who don't must be legislatively forced to open the doors.

Jason gets the last thought. We need to have more faith in our children and friends with labels. We need to stop overprotecting them and let them go into the real world and struggle with it for acceptance. Jason truly brought a new gift to the school. I have seen this over and over again in the past five years. These are our new heroes -- people who aren't flying fast planes or jumping high fences, but who are offering an honest and sincere friendship and openness to learn and to love.

I've learned something from Jason and the young students I've been talking to lately. Maybe love and all its trappings are really enough.... Think about it.

THE SCHOOLS, CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOL BOARDS

The GRIT kids start school

Emma Pivato and Sandra Chomicki

Gerald stands in line with his peers, boots in hand, waiting to go to the kindergarten classroom in his school in East Edmonton. It's January. Gerald has been attending Bellevue Elementary School since September, 1985. Here, along with other students he learns about behavioural expectations like standing in line. He now walks to and from the gym, plays appropriately with a ball, holds a pencil and does straight line colouring -- all unassisted. Because these are tasks which must be learned by all the children, and because his classmates have provided positive role models for him, Gerald learned these new skills faster than either his teacher or personal assistant ever expected. But more important is the fact that Gerald had the potential to acquire these skills, potential that in a different learning environment, might never have been realized or even acknowledged.

On the other side of the city, Kyle rolls in the snow with several classmates. Later he plays at the sand table with three other students while his personal assistant looks on, offering occasional verbal direction. Still later, two other children accompany Kyle to the library where they help him to choose a book and then they sit together listening to a story.

It has not always been so "normal" for Kyle and his classmates, nor is it always that way even now after spending their kindergarten year together. However, the foundation for Kyle's educational career, as for his classmates, has been set. "Kyle is one of our students," says Bob Fletcher, the principal at La Perle Elementary School, "He must move on with his peers."

Alexis sits in her wheelchair aboard a Handi-Bus outside Allendale School in south-central Edmonton. Her grade three class is beginning an excursion to the Space Sciences Centre as a follow-up to a unit on space. The teacher, Cathy Drew, prefers all the children to travel together on field-trips so that Handi-Bus, with wheelchair accessibility, is the obvious choice for transportation.

Although Alexis doesn't always participate in class lessons, it's understood and accepted that she does accompany the class on all excursions. She appears to enjoy the stimulation of new environments and the accompanying experiences. Her classmates treat her as a peer with very specific needs. They assist by taking off coats and boots, hats and mittens; by accompanying her to

and from classrooms and during recess; and by pushing her wheelchair so she can participate in physical education classes. They acknowledge her presence with a "Hi, Alexis" in the same way they acknowledge the presence of other class and school mates. She is acquiring the ability to say "ahiiii" in return.

When school and her classmates are mentioned, Alexis' face lights up and she begins to vocalize. At times her wheelchair can be found beside a classmate's desk in the middle of the classroom. Sometimes Alexis and her personal assistant work together at a table at the back of the classroom. At other times Alexis occupies a portion of a spare classroom where maintenance needs can be more easily met and where intensive one-on-one programs can be carried out more efficiently. There is no doubt, however, that in spite of her intense needs, Alexis is very much a part of the regular grade three class at Allendale School.

These children and others like them are in the vanguard of a radically new approach to educating students with severe handicaps in Canada. They are in regular schools in regular classrooms with regular students. They are there because their parents would not accept any other alternatives.

The children described above are part of a pilot integration project in Edmonton, Alberta. They share two common factors: their label -- dependent handicap, and their educational background, the GRIT (Gateway Residential Intensive Training) preschool program.

Five years ago, when these children were two and three years of age, their parents successfully lobbied the provincial government for funding to begin this unique preschool program. It allowed specially trained developmental assistants supervised by itinerant teachers and therapists, to work one-on-one with the children in their own homes for half or full days during the week. They carried out a rounded developmental program following an individualized educational plan. The intensity and consistency of this approach allowed the children to develop more rapidly and evenly than would otherwise have been possible. And since the parents were fully aware of everything that happened and participated actively in all the team meetings, they could not help but learn a great deal about interventionist techniques. They quickly became committed to the idea of continuing the programs in key developmental areas such as eating and toileting after hours.

Most of the children made good developmental gains and some of the most impressive ones were in socialization. This was very gratifying to the parents since they had been criticized by some of the local educators for not providing their children with the opportunity to socialize with other children in a

centre-based program. Many of the children had definite autistic tendencies when they were young. It seems likely that the intensive daily relationship with the assistant in a relatively quiet, familiar environment gave them the confidence to reach out to another person. They might not have had this opportunity in a noisy, overly stimulating centre where the people interacting with them were constantly changing. It laid the groundwork for more normal socialization later.

By the time the first GRIT students were four and five years of age, early gains in socialization had levelled off. GRIT parents and staff recognized the need for a new social challenge beyond the home. At that point it might have seemed logical to bring some of the GRIT children together but that was not the parents' wish. First of all, they were widely scattered across the city and surrounding areas. But secondly, and more importantly, the parents did not believe their children had much in common except a label!

This was quite a revelation. Here was a group of parents who had worked side-by-side to carry out the administrative responsibilities for their program, and who had shared with each other every gain and setback their children had experienced for two to three years. Many of them became close friends in the process, yet they did not want their children to work together during program hours. Why?

The answer was actually quite simple. Trying to develop communication skills (a major preoccupation with the GRIT parents) was much more difficult when they had to work around two or more sets of handicaps instead of only one. And what does a four-year-old with visual impairments have in common with another four-year-old with mobility impairments?

To the parents it made far more sense to bring their children together with other non-handicapped children in the neighbourhood which was convenient and more likely to facilitate communication than would be the case if handicapped children were brought together. And thus was the concept of integration introduced into the GRIT program! Local nursery schools, daycares and kindergartens were approached and their children, accompanied by developmental assistants, were allowed to attend two to three times a week, usually half-days, as the parents requested. These early ventures were so successful that it soon became standard procedure for the older GRIT students to be integrated into a neighbouring facility to meet their socialization needs and also to prepare them for the transition to a school-based program.

And then it happened. The first crop of GRIT students hit the school system. They were too old to belong to their little (20 students per year)

tailor-made preschool program any longer. The parents visited the local school programs but were not satisfied with the existing alternatives. What to do? What they really wanted was a continuation of the preschool integration experiments but how was that possible?

Then they were made aware of the attempts by the Metro Toronto Separate School Board to integrate children with very challenging needs into regular, age-appropriate classrooms. That message served to crystallize what was already in everyone's heart. They said out loud, first to each other and then to the school board officials -- "Our children need to be in regular classrooms with regular children their own age and we cannot see any suitable alternative to this."

In April 1985 the parents submitted a formal proposal to the Edmonton Public School Board requesting fully integrated placements for their children, indicating why they felt such an option was necessary and suggesting how it could be implemented. At that point CAPE (Coordinated Assessment and Program Planning for Education) became involved. This is a transdisciplinary team of specialists organized under the auspices of the Alberta Government to meet the complex educational needs of exceptional children in Northern Alberta.

CAPE personnel liked the idea of integrating children with severe handicaps into regular classes and offered to help by finding suitable community schools and by providing the itinerant resource people necessary to make the integrated placements feasible.

Five schools throughout the city in reasonable proximity to the respective children's homes were identified. The principals of these schools had various reasons for becoming involved in the integration project and proposed different strategies for broaching the concept to their staff and school communities. In some schools the principals felt no need to justify their decision to place a child with very challenging needs in a regular class, as long as the classroom teacher involved was in agreement. They felt that if the child was a member of the school community, he or she had a legal right to such an educational placement just as any other child would have. Other principals felt the need to explain their decision to the staff and to provide orientation sessions for parents and students.

In September of 1985 school began for the first GRIT graduates. The other children in the classrooms accepted them with remarkable equanimity and the GRIT children quickly demonstrated that they were more than ready for this challenge. Their positive response to the socialization opportunities provided by this normal environment quickly became evident.

One boy, Kent, had developed a serious problem with head-banging over the two preceding years. His very concerned parents had sought help from several behavioural specialists to no avail. But where sophisticated behaviour management techniques had failed, the scorn of his peers succeeded. Their looks of disgust and the disparagement in their voices when they told him what they thought of someone who would deliberately engage in such self-destructive behaviour quickly reduced the number and duration of head-banging episodes at school. Interestingly enough, there was no comparable reduction at home.

Alexis was diagnosed as cortically blind before she started school. However, she is now often observed making a concerted effort to focus on her classmates when they help her off with her jacket or assist her with various projects throughout the day.

Results like these are encouraging. As individuals with a handicap reach adulthood, their lack of appropriate social behaviour is often their main impediment to acquiring jobs, friends and recreational opportunities. In advocating for regular school placements for their children the GRIT parents were not prepared to trade off physical, cognitive and sensory gains for the sake of socialization. Through their close involvement during the preschool years they had become very aware of the specialized techniques needed to facilitate such developmental gains in children with severe handicaps. They knew from these earlier experiences that only highly trained assistants could ensure that such growth would occur. Fortunately, such assistants were provided (rehabilitation practitioners from Grant MacEwan Community College whenever possible) and basic developmental skills the children had acquired during their preschool years were maintained and in many cases surpassed during the 1985-86 school year.

As the school year ended, it was obvious to parents and to the school personnel involved that the integration of these five children with severe handicaps into regular classes was a beneficial experience to all concerned. As long as adequate supports are provided, the viability of such an educational option is no longer in question.

Now the parents' problem is the future. Although their children's integrated programs have been assured for next year, there are no guarantees after that and it is perhaps an ominous sign of things to come that no other children are being allowed into this special project for the coming year. Recent Alberta cut-backs in the money available for special education do not bode well for the future of such special projects.

Cost comparisons done this year revealed that the integrated class

placement costs, on average, were about 25 percent more than comparable special class placements for students with severe handicaps in Alberta. But if the long-term cost efficiency was forecasted, the results would be: decreased dependency because of the enriched learning opportunities; the possibility of buddying two children together with one assistant as they grow and increase their capabilities; the possibility of developing a strong community support network for the parents which could ultimately decrease their reliance on Social Services and Community Health for money for babysitting relief; and substantial savings in transportation costs which could be realized if the children served were in schools close to their homes. There is no question that it is good value for the money when you consider the human benefits of learning and growing for Gerald, Kyle, Alexis and all other children with or without a handicap.

A journey towards integration:
The ABC Pre-school

Judith Sandys and Dorothy Piet

Central to the philosophy of Community Living Mississauga (formerly Mississauga Association for the Mentally Retarded) is the belief that people with mental handicaps -- whatever their age -- have the right to participate in community life alongside their non-handicapped peers. For a long time we have all operated on the assumption that the only way to help people exercise this "right" was to train them until they had acquired all the skills deemed necessary for community participation. Generally, this training has been carried out in segregated settings even though these segregated settings did not provide the positive modelling that is an important ingredient in the learning process. A major problem with this attitude of "getting people ready" is that for many people it simply doesn't work. Some of the individuals we work with have very challenging needs -- they are not likely to succeed at achieving all the items on some community readiness checklist. Does this mean they should forever remain in a segregated setting? We believe not. If training alone does not, in many instances, lead to community participation, what then is the answer? Over time we have come to realize that in order for integration to become a reality, we, as an association, must invest our energies in ensuring that handicapped people have the support they need to participate effectively. This focus on support as the major mission of the association has influenced greatly all the services we provide including our pre-school services. Little children are in the habit of growing up pretty quickly -- leaving us very little time to get them "ready" for integrated pre-schools.

In 1964, a group of four parents -- unable to enroll their children who were mentally handicapped in regular nursery schools, obtained a small room in a church and brought their children there three or four mornings per week for socializing activities. Between 1964 and 1969 the nursery was run by parents and volunteers. A license was obtained from the Day Nurseries Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services in 1969. In September of that year a teacher was hired for the seven children who attended two and one-half hours per day, five days a week. By January 1978, the number has risen to ten children and a second teacher was hired.

Between 1970 and 1980 the population in Mississauga grew significantly and

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this was reflected by the increase in the size of ABC Nursery School, which at one point reached 36 children.

The pre-school programs always served children with varying degrees of handicaps. Children who were mildly handicapped were referred to regular pre-school programs only on rare occasions during this period, and these experiences were invariably positive. When the Region of Peel began accepting some children with handicaps into its Child Development Centres in 1977 a greater number of children had the opportunity to participate in an integrated setting, although this too involved children with only fairly mild mental handicaps (as well as children with other developmental disabilities).

Thus in spite of all these developments, in 1979 in Mississauga, the greatest majority of children with mental handicaps were in a large segregated pre-school program. Because we felt that integration was "good" we began to look at alternatives.

The journey begins

The first step came in January 1980, when we decided to move four children and one teacher into a regular day care centre. Again we chose children who were relatively mildly delayed, and even though some were three and four, all were placed in the "junior" room. It did not take very long for the staff of the centre to suggest that some of the children move into groups with children their own age.

When we started in the day care centre, we decided that the children would benefit from socializing with their peers over the lunch period, and so they attended daily from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

In September 1981, we started a second integrated unit, this one in a community nursery school that operated two hours per day. We soon discovered that this had many drawbacks. The day was much too short -- especially since chronic busing problems meant our children invariably arrived late. Also, the lunch hour was greatly missed. Several months later, we moved this group to a day care setting too.

During the 1982-83 school year, we continued the two integrated units. Also during this time, we decided that since lunch hour was so positive, we should offer it to all the children, and therefore expanded the length of the program, even for the children in the segregated program.

Over time, we became more and more convinced of the values of integration.

The children in the integrated settings all benefited greatly from the experience -- most noticeable were the gains in speech and social skills. We believed that all the children -- regardless of how handicapped they were -- deserved the same opportunity.

The major development of the 1983-84 school year was "casual integration". We began taking all the children, accompanied by a teacher or volunteer, to regular community programs about once a week. This gave the community programs an opportunity to meet the children, some of whom had very challenging needs. It also helped parents to adjust to the whole idea and gave staff increased confidence and heightened their determination to integrate all the children.

In late winter 1984, the Pre-School Services Committee and subsequently the Board, discussed pre-school education for all children. Both the committee and the Board were extremely supportive -- perhaps because we had long been discussing the merits of integration, our experiences to date had been extremely positive, and we were struggling with the same issues in other service areas as well. We made the decision to close our segregated program completely by September 1984. This required a considerable amount of courage. We had to notify the church that we would not be renewing the lease in the fall -- long before we had succeeded in finding alternative settings for all the children.

Around this same time, the Region of Peel offered to rent us space for eight children in the new day care centre they were opening in September 1984. We gratefully accepted, on condition that there would be plenty of opportunities for the children to interact with the other children.

In the spring of 1984, we held a meeting for the parents, at w c we presented our plans for the fall. We explained our rationale, what we h ed to accomplish and how. We did not discuss the plans for any individual child; rather we assured the parents that we would sit down and plan with them. Included in our planning would be an identification of the support needs of their particular child. One of the things that we made quite clear was our expectation that with children going to a pre-school or day care program in their own neighbourhood, that parents would, whenever possible, take responsibility for transporting their own children.

The general response of parents was, as we had anticipated, positive, though a bit guarded. Parents needed some reassurance that their child's needs would be met, that in-home support would continue, that we would help with transportation if necessary.

By September 1984, we had left our segregated program behind. All our children were -- and are -- in settings with non-handicapped children.

Our plan

Our initial plan was the essence of simplicity. We would, with the input of parents, locate a pre-school program for each child in, or as close as possible to -- his or her own neighbourhood. Our teachers would move from centre to centre acting primarily as resource teachers (as well as continuing with in-home programming). We knew that some children, particularly those with additional physical handicaps, might need more on-site support than such a teacher could provide. But we had a ready solution to this as well. With children going to programs close to home, parents would certainly be able to transport their children to and from pre-school. We would use the substantial amounts of money that we would save on transportation as well as the "rent" money we had paid to the church, to purchase extra support for children who required it.

Such was our plan; the reality has been somewhat different.

What really happened

As is often the case, things did not work out exactly as we had planned. Through the diligent efforts of staff and parents we succeeded in locating settings for all the children. We rented space from the Region in one of their child development centres and have eight children attending there. Technically, the children are "assigned" to this room. In fact most of the children are in different rooms for most of the day, and at any one time a number of children from other rooms are in our room.

Certainly, there are some real advantages to this kind of set-up; the freedom and flexibility to move in and out, the fact that you "own" the space and can't be asked to leave. Nevertheless, this arrangement is something of a compromise. When in other rooms, the children are still "visitors" -- they don't quite belong.

The most "typical" set-up is a centre with four children, one of our teachers, and a "classroom assistant" and perhaps some volunteers (including Katimaviks and co-op students). Typically, the four will include one child with significantly high needs. The children will never all be in the same room, but will be divided up among two or even three groups. Generally the assistant works predominantly in the room with the child who has the most challenging needs.

The role of the classroom assistant is to provide assistance to the regular classroom teacher so that she or he can more effectively meet the needs of all the children. Thus the classroom assistant is instructed not to "hover" over the handicapped child. She is also involved in meeting the child's physical care needs.

In some settings where there are only one or two children, we have provided an assistant or arranged for regular volunteers. As well, the resource teacher comes around regularly to establish goals, set up programs and monitor their implementation. For some children the input of the resource teacher is sufficient and no extra support is required.

It is important to point out that it has not been all smooth sailing. We have encountered a number of difficulties along the way. For one thing, we have sometimes found it quite difficult to provide the needed level of support to a child with fairly high needs when there are only one or two children in a setting. We cannot provide an aide for each child, and a resource teacher who is not around all the time may not be sufficient. In past years we have always relied heavily on a dedicated corps of volunteers, but our experience has been that it is difficult to provide the necessary continuity with volunteers, without on-site direction from an always-there teacher. Furthermore, some community programs do not welcome the disruption caused by different people being there every day.

One disappointment has been the fact that only about one-third of the parents have been able to take responsibility for transporting their children on a regular basis. Some parents do not have the use of a car, they work, or they have other very young children. Also, we have not succeeded in having all the children attend a program very close to their home. There are several reasons for this:

- o When a new child starts, we may be able to very adequately support him or her in an integrated setting -- but one that is not close to his or her home.
- o It is hard for one site to support more than one child with extremely challenging needs.
- o We do not like to group children in ways that unnecessarily increase their visibility (e.g., four children with Down syndrome stand out much more than one or two).

Since we now have to get children to many more locations, transportation has become increasingly complex, and at least as costly as before.

Another surprise (though it shouldn't have been) is the fact that

community sites want to be reimbursed for the spaces they make available. In the earlier years, we had generally been able to find free or low cost spaces and we had anticipated that this would continue on a larger scale. Basically the approach we were using was not to ask a centre to accommodate us within their existing spaces but to ask the Ministry of Community and Social Services to extend their license by four, in order that we could be accommodated without using up their paid spaces. This has worked to a limited extent. Most centres do expect to be paid and unless we are prepared to do this, our right to be there is always tenuous. Thus a good part of our money is being used to pay for spaces in these community programs.

Finally, we have had to contend with the fact that when we are not in our own space, we do not have the same control over the behavioural standards that are established. Recently one child was expelled for biting. While we felt this was extremely unjust, we had no option but to remove the child and find another location.

There are other ways, also, in which this new approach has complicated life. Going around to so many different settings, observing what is happening, liaising with the different centres and the different ministry staff involved is no small task. It is no longer possible to rely on informal communication and supervision that often takes place when everyone is working at the same location at the same time.

To deal with the complexity of a widely dispersed program such as this requires a systematic and structured approach to ensure that things do not get overlooked, and that staff receive regular, goal-oriented supervision. Staff meetings assume even more importance as they become a major vehicle for staff to provide each other with much needed support.

What we have learned

- It is not easy.
- It is not free.
- It is worth it.

Plans for the future

We will be doing things a little differently this year. We will be much more careful about establishing settings for only one or two children. It is not that we do not think they are good, but rather that at this point we are anxious about our own ability to provide the level of support required. By and large these settings will be reserved for children who do not require extra

on-site support on a continuing basis. In some of the larger settings we may have as many as five children with a teacher and an assistant (and some volunteers). We see this as being workable where the setting is such that the children can be accommodated in several different groups. Conversely, we anticipate some settings with only three children.

We are beginning to look at augmenting our bus transportation system with taxis and eventually might go entirely to a taxi system.

We will be working hard to ensure continuity of support people in all settings. In addition to four assistants that we hire directly, we will be trying to obtain short-term funding through various federal and provincial initiatives.

We will be paying a consistent amount for all our spaces.

There is no doubt that the whole process has turned out to be significantly more complex than any of us had imagined. Nonetheless, I do not think that there has been a single moment when any of us has regretted the decision to move towards integration. The children are benefiting greatly, as are the non-handicapped children, staff and parents in these programs. Certainly the parents are fully convinced of the value of integration. None would opt for segregation if it were offered. We all continue to believe that all children with developmental delays can benefit from participation in regular day care/nursery school programs.

A number of factors have helped in this whole process. Certainly the close and supportive relationship we have developed with the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services is one such factor. Another has been the active involvement of parents in this whole process, beginning with input into the selection of locations. The eagerness of staff of community programs to learn about and work with children with handicaps has been heartening, as has been the overwhelming acceptance of the children themselves.

When we visit a program and watch one of the children help a child with a handicap stamp his feet at circle time, when we see two children fight over who will push the child in the stroller, or when we go out on the playground and have trouble finding the child with the handicap, then we know that it is most certainly worth it!

Philosophy statement and staffing model for provision of special services

Philosophy

All school-age children in our province have a right to a publicly supported education. All students must be provided with appropriate educational programs and/or services necessary to assist them in realizing their highest potential as individuals and members of society.

In New Brunswick schools we have always had children with challenging and unique special educational needs. Recently, however, as society has become more accepting of the handicapped within their ranks, and as the education system has evolved professionally and become more capable of meeting these needs, educators have taken more responsibility for these exceptional children and their programs and services.

Recent legislation, Bill 85, Section 6, reference to Schools Act, Section 45 (2.1), clearly directs that, to the maximum extent appropriate, exceptional pupils in New Brunswick are to be educated with their age-appropriate peers in the least restrictive environment in which their educational and related needs can be satisfactorily met.

In New Brunswick, therefore, exceptional pupils do have the right to be educated and have access to constructive interaction and instruction with their age-appropriate peers. Special classes, separate schooling or removal of exceptional pupils from the regular class environment should occur only when extensive and appropriate individual program planning indicates that education in regular classes with the provision of supplementary supports and services cannot meet the student's educational and social needs, or there is clear evidence that partial or full removal is desirable for the welfare of the child or the other children. If removal from the regular class is deemed necessary, this should occur for a limited time and with a goal-oriented plan focussed on returning the child to his or her regular class.

Goals

The goal of educational integration is: to provide all children with the opportunity to grow up and go to school with the full range of age-appropriate peers in their community.

Working Paper, Student Services Branch (1987) January,
Province of New Brunswick, Department of Special Services

Fundamental assumptions

1. The responsibility for providing education for **all** children must be shared by the Department of Education, the school district and the school. Instructional programs and support services necessary to serve the increasingly wide range of children with a variety of special needs must be provided. These programs and services should be delivered in the child's local or nearest school and in as normal a manner as possible.

2. The ultimate goals for learning and development are the same for **all** children. Time components, instructional strategies and materials necessary to achieve these goals may differ.

3. The basis for program and service planning must be the individual student. In all educational practice, the best interest of each student must be given primary consideration and educational success can only be defined as it relates to these individuals and the extent to which they benefit.

4. In any instructional group of students, one will find different and individual characteristics. Some of these include: level of skill and knowledge, speed or pace of learning, learning style, areas of interest, and personal goals and ambitions. While these differences are fundamentally the same for any group educational setting, they will be more evident if exceptional students are included in the group.

5. While students may be grouped and still receive differential instruction, homogeneity of all individual characteristics is neither possible nor desirable.

6. The concept of integration in education is consistent with, and reflects the values of a society which supports the ideology of multiculturalism and individual differences.

The following model illustrates the range of program alternatives which must be available if the above philosophy is to be fully implemented. The philosophy, recent legislation and this model emphasize the responsibility of the local school and the regular classroom for meeting the needs of most students within the regular classroom.

Program alternatives

(1) Regular class -- regular program -- regular expectations

(2) Regular class -- regular program -- modified expectations

(3) Regular class -- special program

(4) Regular class -- special/modified program + help in planning

(5) Regular class -- special/modified program + help in planning and implementation

(6) Regular class -- special/modified program + on-going help in class

(7) Regular class -- special/modified program + withdrawal for specific instruction

(8) Regular class -- special/modified program + crisis withdrawal

(9) Regular class -- extensive withdrawal for compelling reasons

The **extensive withdrawal** referred to in level 9 may include: full time for a period of time, on a day-to-day basis for an unspecified period of time, part of every day for periods of long or short duration, or total as during placement in some residential setting (e.g., APSEA programs).

Compelling reasons may include: a medically fragile condition, hospitalization and/or at-home convalescence due to illness or accident, uncontrolled behaviour dangerous to others, or to receive more extensive specialist or remedial care that cannot be offered effectively by ordinary schools.

It should be noted that the incidence of this extensive withdrawal should be low and should continue only as long as the reason(s) persist. The school system is still responsible for these children but their programs and services may be provided in places other than a regular classroom or school. The ultimate goal should always be to return the child to the regular classroom.

Support services

This model indicates the need for varying services for all students from the regular or normal student, able to deal effectively with the regular program; to our most severely handicapped students who may need extensive program modifications in addition to other supports and services.

As regular classroom teachers are increasingly responsible for teaching

students with more complex needs than the mild learning difficulties previously encountered, they must have access to support personnel who can assist them in identifying and observing students with special instructional needs. They must have available to them specialist teachers who can assist them in determining the extent of learning needs of delays and also assist them in devising classroom strategies and alternative educational programs designed to meet these students' specific needs. It should be noted that approximately 95 percent of the student population will be totally served in the regular classroom if these supports are available. (Levels 1-5 of the model.)

The additional five percent of the student population are those with the most severe handicapped conditions. This group includes those students with severe developmental delay, the multiple and/or severely or profoundly handicapped (approximately one percent of the population, the less severely delayed, the severely learning disabled and the emotionally and behaviourally disordered (approximately four percent of the population). They require services as described in levels 6-9 of the model. These students, too, should be part of the regular classroom and have their programs integrated to the greatest extent possible.

The concept of integration assumes individualized instruction within the classroom, as well as a withdrawal program as needed, and extensive support services for the teacher.

As the severity of the handicap increases, so may the needs of the child, the extent of the support required, the degree of specialization required of personnel, materials, equipment, transportation, etc. Increased staffing ratios are required to serve these students.

Integration of special needs students

P.J.H. Malmberg, Deputy Minister of Education

Editor's Note: The following is the text of Mr. Malmberg's remarks at the Strategies for Achieving Integration workshop held at Woodstock, N.B. on October 14, 1986.

The New Brunswick public education system is currently experiencing several substantial and long overdue changes in curriculum and instructional organization. I mention French Second Language Education and senior high school organization as examples.

Planning for, and carrying through arrangements for the integration of special needs, handicapped students into the public education system, is perhaps the most radical and thorough change of all. People involved in social change have to be prepared for the challenges and opportunities it presents. This is why I commend the organizers of this workshop and welcome the opportunity to participate in it.

In speaking to the theme of the workshop, Strategies for Achieving Integration, I will concentrate on goals, realities and process.

The Schools Act of the Province of New Brunswick states that the Minister of Education shall provide free school privileges to every person from age six to 20 who has not graduated from high school and is a resident of the school district in which he or she is to attend school. This is our goal. It means acceptance of and commitment to the ZERO REJECT concept. The school system is obligated to provide an education to every student who meets the requirements of the Schools Act.

The reality is that the public school system has not been prepared to meet this very challenging goal. I has been working at it in stages over the past decade but currently feverish efforts are being made to realize it.

For the past 30 years or more, the expectation has been that special needs, handicapped students could best be provided for in a segregated setting. Many people, including parents and advocates associated with the Canadian Association for Mentally Retarded (CAMR), now the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL), have been increasingly dissatisfied with and critical of

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that approach. They have now carried the day.

Most professionals working in the education field have been prepared to work with the students who fall within the centre of the ability range. They must now be prepared to work with the full ability range. We need help and support to accept this wider and more challenging mandate. There is no use in being judgmental at this time.

This is where process comes into the picture. Educators are prepared to be communicators in helping young people become literate, numerate, knowledgeable and responsive. Educators are not trained in medicine, therapies and the more sophisticated concepts of social work. But to meet this wider social challenge, educators need help in these specialties.

Educators need to enlarge and sharpen their knowledge and skills to work with special needs, handicapped children. The education system must approach special education students according to their educational needs, not according to their disabilities. Emphasizing the labelling of students by their handicap directs the attention to the handicap and gives the idea that a particular label carries with it a specific educational approach -- a medicine for a condition.

A student is a student, FIRST. Education depends on good communication. Education workers have to be trained to be more effective communicators in working with special needs, handicapped students which places a responsibility on the education system to provide staff with more training in teaching students whom they have not had in their schools and classrooms. This is a slow process. but with planning, good programs, supportive trainers and a lot of patience on the part of all concerned, the school system is rising to the challenge.

The process must be extended to students and parents as well as staff. Many communities in New Brunswick are further ahead in the integration process this fall than they were last year and I am certain all communities will be further ahead this time next fall. But even with everyone's best efforts, several years will be required to reach the goal of the Schools Act, that is, educational opportunities for everyone through the public school system. With persistence and patience we will eventually get there.

School integration, Districts 28 and 29

Gordon Porter, Coordinator, Student Services, Woodstock, N.B.

The integration of students with a mental handicap into the schools and classrooms of New Brunswick has been happening with increasing frequency during the last few years. It has occurred with considerable discussion about both the goals and effects of integration. Most observers agree with the general idea of integration, but many have been anxious about the process to follow, the resources required and the degree of certainty that those resources will be made available.

During the 1985-86 school year, Districts 28 and 29 in New Brunswick adopted a policy on special education that establishes full integration as the starting point for program planning for all students with special needs. Implementation of this policy is now in its second year. What follows is a description of our policy, as well as our implementation plan, followed by a report on how things are going thus far.

Background:

Prior to 1978, Districts 28 and 29 had few educational support services for students with special needs. Students were taught in regular classrooms, and teachers had access to only the usual administrative and curriculum resources. The school had to make use of external agencies or programs such as the Mental Health Clinic for needed assessment services. Children who were labelled mentally retarded were served in segregated schools run by local branches of the Association for the Mentally Retarded. Children were transported over long distances to attend the Peter Pan School located in Woodstock.

Initial Service Development:

Our initial development of services was concentrated in two areas: assessment services at a district level and instructional services at the school level. The first area was addressed by establishing a district team, consisting of a coordinator, psychometrist, academic diagnostician and speech/language pathologist. The functions of this team included assessment, consultation, program development and training.

Reprinted from **Education New Brunswick**, New Brunswick Department of Education, November, 1986

At the school level, we gradually assigned staff to provide instructional services using the resource teacher model. Typically, students were pulled out of regular classes 2 to 5 times weekly for 20 to 60 minutes and received individual or small-group instruction in key areas.

In 1983, our district took responsibility for the auxiliary class programs operating in our area. We found the move from a segregated school to placement of classes for students labelled mentally handicapped in the regular school very successful. It happened with much less difficulty than expected. We started gradually, but by the end of three years, almost every student had a regular homeroom and went to at least a few classes with other students.

Need for change:

Despite the major gains made over the previous seven years, it was clear we had not developed programs sufficient to meet the needs of all our students. We needed to look at our policy and practices and try to develop a more comprehensive approach.

Difficulties:

I would like to point out several areas of difficulty that we were able to identify.

First, by using the school referral -- district assessment approach, we were encouraging the school to give up responsibility for the student's learning during the waiting period between referral and the case conference. This period varied but could be anywhere from 6 to 12 weeks, and during this time, schools might often just carry on with a poor situation.

Then there was the problem of having teachers accept and carry out the recommendations given. In most cases, this meant more time for planning, using new techniques or new programs, and no real assistance.

Another tendency that had to be resisted was to identify the three or four students who were "slow learners" in the class and ask that they receive their reading or math instruction from the resource teacher. This was clearly not intended.

A related difficulty was the inclination of regular teachers to assume that responsibility for a student's entire program had shifted to the resource teacher when, in fact, the resource teacher was only picking up a portion of it. Well-written, Individual Education Plans and emphasis on the need for

communication and discussion did not eliminate this problem.

Communication was a key issue for resource teachers, and they maintained it was very difficult for them to find the time to talk to teachers since they were busy teaching all day.

The most fundamental challenge for the student labelled mentally handicapped was to get the regular teacher to accept responsibility for the student. We contributed to this by accepting that the student had to spend most of the day in a segregated class receiving "special instruction." Most teachers accepted the social and self-image benefits of integration to the handicapped student, but worried a great deal about what they were to teach the youngster and the effect the time spent would have on other students.

There was considerable discussion about needing in-service training, special knowledge of teaching techniques and evidence in research that integration works.

We clearly had to find another way to tackle this problem.

New policy:

During the spring, summer, and fall of 1985, we carried out a review of our assumptions, goals and policies regarding students with special needs. As a result, we developed what we think is a reasonable and workable approach to this issue.

First, we believe that the only way for students with handicaps or special needs to be accepted as part of the school is to have them placed in the regular class and that the regular class teacher be responsible for their education. We believe that they should only leave the regular class for specialized instruction for "compelling reasons necessary to meet the student's needs." Thus, segregated instruction will only occur when there has been a clear judgment made that it is necessary to meet the student's needs, not those of the teacher or the principal.

While placing the responsibility for instruction on the regular class teacher, we do recognize that teachers require support to do this work. To provide this support, we have changed the role of the resource teacher or special education teacher to that of a methods and resource teacher and have allocated these positions on a systematic basis in our schools. The methods and resource teacher will provide immediate and direct assistance to the classroom teacher in planning and establishing individual programs for students with

special needs. They will also provide instruction outside the classroom in the small number of cases where this is required.

We believe this approach will produce better results for students who are handicapped and will also have long-term benefits for other students and teachers, particularly in their sensitivity and attitudes toward people who are handicapped. I am pleased with the progress we have made, but we still have a great deal to do to fully implement our policy.

How is it going?

Implementation of our policy this year has been going well. Principals and teachers are becoming increasingly confident in both the process and results of the program. This is not to say there are no difficulties, or that some teachers do not feel anxious and concerned. But the problems are being dealt with, and as much support as possible is being provided in each case.

Principals in each of our schools have developed a school implementation plan, and teacher needs will be dealt with at that level. This complements the district training for both principals and methods and resource teachers that has been funded by the Department of Education. Several special training events have been planned for principals, and we have half-day training sessions every second week for methods and resource teachers.

Part of our implementation plan is to eliminate the congregation of special needs students in certain schools and have them enrol in the school they should naturally attend. We have carried out the first step in this process this year by breaking up a class of seven students at the junior high level and having two in one school, two in a second school, and three students in a third. Some additional staff was required to do this, but we found the Department of Education co-operative in assisting us in carrying out our plan. We anticipate further moves in this direction at the elementary level during the next school year.

The result:

The results of our initiative are substantial. First, our districts are promoting a positive approach to the education of students with special needs. It commits us to being positive about students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach.

Second, we have established a policy that assumes ability, not disability, as the basis for placement and programming. Students are integrated unless

there is a sound reason for restrictive instruction to meet their needs. Teachers and principals must be prepared to state what those reasons are and stand behind them.

Third, our policy applies to all students and is school-based. School-based staff are expected to work to meet students needs. They are to request additional support, if needed, but they should be able to get on with the job in the meantime.

Finally, and most importantly, individual students are directly benefitting from this program. They are placed in regular homeroom classes; they spend substantial portions of the day in regular classes with their age-peers; they receive support in the regular class as it is needed; they are gaining self-confidence, communication skills and social skills; they have the opportunity to gain academic skills.

I could share many examples of how the integration process has worked but I will only offer the following two to illustrate:

Wilma is 12 years old and is in a grade 5 class. She initially attended a segregated school in Woodstock but moved to her neighbourhood school four years ago. She was in an auxiliary classroom but was gradually integrated for portions of the day. It was noted that Wilma had serious problems with silly behaviour, echolalia [repetition of speech] and perseveration [repetition of actions] in the segregated class. These behaviours did not occur at all in the regular class. This year she does not leave her class for instruction, although an aide goes in twice a day for half-hours periods to assist her. Her teacher involves her in classroom activities and finds many ways to include her in the instructional process. For example, in a math lesson, the students were working on a simple algebra question (09-N-=X). The teacher provided a different number for N and the students would solve the problem. Wilma knows her numbers to 15 so she was asked to identify the number provided on several of the examples. This promoted her involvement in the class, practiced a skill appropriate for her, and took very little time. A creative and imaginative teacher had found a way to meet her needs in the regular classroom.

Bob is 19-years-old and is now in his fourth year of high school. He previously attended a segregated school for mentally handicapped students. During the last two years, he took Communications 122 and particularly enjoyed photography, video projects and a drama project. This year, he goes to physical education with regular students in periods 1 and 2; takes Biology 122 in periods 3 and 4; works in the cafeteria during period 5; and takes a foods course in periods 6 and 7. The foods class involves only

with special needs, but all the other time periods are with other students in the school. Employment skills are an important part of Bob's program. He leaves school two afternoons a week to work in a fast food restaurant. His teacher expects to increase his work training in the second term, looking ahead to full employment by June. Bob particularly enjoys the Biology 122 class. He keeps notes prepared by his teacher and the methods and resource teacher. They help him keep track of the key ideas and concepts of the course. He completes special projects with great interest and enthusiasm, and he has two lab partners who work with him on all the experiments required in the program. He plays a part in each activity. The other students regard him as a member of the class.

These two examples are what the integration process is all about. It is about students learning and belonging, and it is about educators giving them an opportunity to do so. Districts 28 and 29 do not have all the answers to the challenge of educating students with special needs, but we have set our course and are committed to working to achieve our goals.

Integration

Lloyd Allaby, M. Ed., Principal Centennial Elementary School, Woodstock, N.B.

Integration of former auxiliary class students [students in segregated classes] has been a slow but steady practice at Centennial School. When auxiliary students came to our school in November, 1982, we had meetings with parents, staff, district office personnel, and people from the Canadian Association for Community Living. Very little integration took place that first year from November 1982 to June, 1983. For the most part, the auxiliary class teacher and attendant kept the students in the room we had provided. The room itself was very attractive with new carpeting, individual lockers, sinks and a bathroom.

During that first year, two or three students went to music and physical education. Occasionally, they spent a small part of the day in regular classrooms. This usually consisted of opening exercises and concerts. The same pattern continued into the 1984-85 school year with students going to regular classrooms for the previously-mentioned subjects as well as for some language arts activities. Some of the students had an attendant with them.

It was our hope to more fully integrate the students during the 1985-86 school year. However, the auxiliary class teacher received an educational leave, and integration remained much as it had been during the 1984-85 school year.

In May of 1986, it was decided that the eight auxiliary students would be fully integrated into regular classrooms and would start the year off at their age-appropriate grade level. Each student's abilities were discussed with the regular home-room teacher for the 1986-87 school year. The Individual Educational Programs were reviewed, parents consulted, and informed of the placement. Teachers were given what initial help they needed to get started.

It was understood by the eight teachers that they would receive daily assistance from the auxiliary class teacher (now called the methods and resource teacher). The methods and resource teacher is available to remove any child for what we would describe as compelling reasons. We removed only two of the students on a regular basis for specialized help with the methods and resource teacher. The methods and resource teacher and aide go into the other classrooms

Reprinted from **Education New Brunswick**, New Brunswick Department of Education, November, 1986

and work directly to support the student for about two half-hour sessions per day.

It is clearly understood that these eight students are the responsibility of the classroom teachers, and their educational progress is determined by them with assistance from the methods and resource teacher. The I.E.P. has been jointly developed by the classroom teacher and the methods and resource teacher, with appropriate input from parents.

Since full integration has occurred, we have found that these special students have experienced fewer discipline problems, are better able to handle their own self-care with minimal assistance, have made friends with other students, and are successful in academic areas for the first time.

The teacher makes the difference in determining degree of success. Let's not fool ourselves and think that we have achieved the goal. We are working daily on revisions and improvements. It has been easy to describe the process on paper, but we have had many ups and downs along the way. The process is still not perfect, nor will it ever be; but these students with special needs are part of regular classrooms experiences.

Philosophical statement

The Baffin Divisional Board of Education recognizes that every person is unique and has the right to an education appropriate to his/her individual strengths and needs with his/her peers in the local community school within the regular classroom.

Additional supports and services are often required to provide an appropriate learning program for individuals with special needs.

Special services philosophy

Canadians with special needs have more in common with other citizens than they have differences. Nevertheless, the combined impact of these differences and the discrimination they face has meant that many of the things we take for granted in our lives cannot be taken for granted in their lives. The Baffin Divisional Board of Education believes that the fundamental rights of special needs citizens have not been fully recognized in the past. These include:

The right to live with, and as part of a family or household of relatives or friends.

The right to live in their own community.

The right to enjoy a culturally appropriate education which nurtures and prepares them for life as an adult in their own community.

The right of access to meaningful work and an adequate income.

The right to a full range of social opportunities for friendship and recreation.

The right to self expression and independence.

The right to recognition and protection.

Special needs citizens can learn best when these rights are met and when they are living at home and attending classes with their peers. Individual education programs can be effective when they start as early as possible, involve the family, and develop specific skills that are essential for participation in the daily social and economic life of the community.

Meeting the special needs of students in communities is a high priority

Excerpted from the **Baffin Divisional Board of Education Policy Manual**, June 1985.

for the Baffin Divisional Board of Education. Moreover, the board is determined to advocate for the additional supports and services which will ensure that the rights and special needs of citizens can be met within the communities of the division.

The board believes that the following policies and procedures challenge and support educators in the development and implementation of individual programs for special needs students.

It is the policy of the Baffin Divisional Board of Education that:

1) Individual Education Programs (I.E.P.'s) shall be developed for all students with special needs.

2) Individual Education Programs shall include:
   a) long term goals;
   b) short-term behavioural objectives for each goal;
   c) person(s) responsible for implementation;
   d) suggested strategies, materials and resources for implementation;
   e) a statement outlining parent consultation;
   f) written parental consent for program implementation and/or major program change(s);
   g) a program review date (within 6 months of program implementation);
   h) criteria for evaluation;
   i) principal's/adult educator's signature upon completion.

3) Individual Education Programs shall be developed by or in co-operation with, a qualified special education teacher, with the parent, the classroom teacher and any others with information to contribute to the child's program.

4) An individual Education Program Team includes:
   a) The Principal (or designate) - Chairperson
   b) The Classroom Teacher
   c) Special Needs Education Staff
   d) Parents and/or the Special Needs Student
   e) other persons as required.

5) An Individual Education Program Team at the school level shall be responsible for:
   a) Assisting classroom teachers in meeting the needs of the individual student through adaptations if the regular program.
   b) Considering the requests of teachers for assessment of the individual student beyond the classroom level.

c) Referring the student for appropriate assessment, when necessary.
d) Defining the needs of the student, requesting the development of an Individual Education Program, and designating the person(s) responsible for its preparation.
e) Reviewing, evaluating and reporting student progress in relation to the Individual Education Program during each school reporting period.

1. The Baffin Divisional Board of Education recognizes that it is essential to support teachers with special needs students in their classes if I.E.P. implementation is to be successful.

2. Teachers with special needs students in their classes shall be provided with the training, materials, professional and administrative supports required to develop and implement I.E.P.'s in a regular classroom.

Such supports might include:

a) Training:
observation and assessment techniques
classroom management skills for individualization
individualizing the curriculum
developing and implementing I.E.P.'s
locating and preparing materials for implementing I.E.P.'s
home and interagency co-ordination and co-operation working with special needs assistants

b) Materials:
policy and procedure guidelines
student observation and assessment guidelines
specialized equipment where required
curriculum scope and sequence checklists.

c) Staff:
special needs support staff
teachers with special education qualifications
special needs assistance
access to colleagues and professionals in other related fields (health, social services, etc.)

d) Administration:
I.E.P. teams
release time for observation, training and case management
classroom support to enable teacher to teach special needs students

individually or in small groups

3. Teaching personnel shall be encouraged to take professional training in special needs education.

It is the policy of the Baffin Divisional Board of Education that:

1. Roles with respect to Special Services be defined as follows and revised when job descriptions change or such personnel are not available in a school.

a) Superintendent and/or Assistant Superintendents:
   (i) Ensure that the policies and procedures with respect to Special Services are followed in the Division;
   (ii) Ensure that annual submissions for funding are prepared and submitted to the Minister of Education;
   (iii) Ensure that principals fulfill their roles with respect to special needs students in a school;
   (iv) Support, advise and supervise the Co-Ordinator of Special Services and/or the Program Support Team, Special Services;
   (v) Whenever possible be familiar with the I.E.P.'s for special needs students in the Board;
   (vi) Ensure that the Appeal Procedure is followed;
   (vii) Provide leadership and direction in the development of Special Services in the Division.

b) The Principal or Vice-Principal shall:
   (i) Ensure that I.E.P.'s are prepared and implemented in accordance with the Special Services Policies and Procedures;
   (ii) Act as Chairperson for the I.E.P. Team in a school and ensure that minutes of meetings are accurately maintained and distributed;
   (iii) Ensure that student records, with respect to I.E.P.'s are maintained;
   (iv) Support and encourage the members of the I.E.P. Team;
   (v) Discuss and advise teachers with respect to special needs students;
   (vi) Ensure that I.E.P.'s are reviewed and modified when necessary;
   (vii) Foster and maintain communication with parents with respect to special needs students;
   (viii) Ensure that the Education Council is aware of programs for special needs students;
   (ix) Document the needs for Special Services in a school;

(x) Foster and maintain communication with other agencies in a community to encourage the implementation of C.S.P.'s;

(xi) Co-ordinate professional development with respect to Special Services for educators in the school.

c) The classroom teacher, in relation to special needs students, shall:

(i) Act as part of an I.E.P. Team for those special needs students in his/her class;

(ii) Assist in the development of the I.E.P.'s;

(iii) Describe the strengths and needs of students with special needs referred to the I.E.P. Team;

(iv) Teach their special needs students in accordance with the I.E.P.'s;

(v) Report on the progress of special needs students;

(vi) Maintain close communication with the parents of special needs students;

(vii) Participate in training and professional development opportunities relating to special needs students;

(viii) Maintain confidentiality with respect to special needs students;

(ix) Act as an advocate for special needs students, if necessary.

d) The Special Needs Teacher shall:
(Should no special needs teacher be available in a school these responsibilities shall be shared between members of the I.E.P. Team)

(i) Co-ordinating Role:
- with the Principal co-ordinate the I.E.P. team;
- establish and maintain accurate records for all I.E.P.'s
- record, distribute and file records for all I.E.P. meetings
- gather and share information required to develop an I.E.P.
- ensure that confidentiality of student information is respected;
- plan, co-operatively with the classroom teacher, to inform parents about a referral, I.E.P. development and student progress.

(ii) Program Development Role:
- develop appropriate I.E.P.'s based on students' individual strengths and needs;
- conduct, when necessary, co-operative comprehensive assessments in accordance with the assessment policies and procedures;
- locate resources, programs and materials to support I.E.P.'s;
- monitor students' progress with respect to the I.E.P.'s;

- establish and maintain a resource centre to support I.E.P.'s and C.S.P.'s;
- enable classroom teachers to work with special needs students by teaching the remainder of the class;
- teach special needs students as necessary.

(iii) Professional Development Role:
- provide training for educators, parents, peers and other persons who deliver and/or support I.E.P.'s.

e) Special Needs Assistants:
(i) Assist a classroom teacher to implement an I.E.P.;
(ii) Conduct student evaluation under the guidance of a qualified special needs teacher;
(iii) Act as a member of an I.E.P. Team;
(iv) Assist the classroom Teacher with the care of special needs students;
(v) Maintain records and reports as required by the I.E.P. Team;
(vi) Other duties as required by the I.E.P. Team.

f) Special Services Support Team:
(i) Respond to all referrals;
(ii) Conduct assessments, when necessary, in accordance with the Assessment Policy;
(iii) Support the school I.E.P. Team in the development of the programs for individual students;
(iv) Offer professional development workshop and specific training in the area of Special Services;
(v) Document special needs in the Division;
(vi) Maintain a resource centre to support schools in the development of I.E.P.'s;
(vii) Submit reports on activities as required;
(viii) Encourage interagency co-operation in order to facilitate the development of services for special needs students;
(ix) Act as advocates for special needs students within the Division.

It is the policy of the Baffin Divisional Board of Education that:

1) Parents shall be an integral part of the development and implementation of Individual Education Programs for special needs students.

2) Written parental permission shall be obtained prior to:
a) referral for assessment beyond the regular classroom level;
b) implementation of an Individual Education Program;
c) implementation of major changes in an Individual Education Program;

d) sharing of personal student information, either orally or in writing, with other professional agents/advocates.

It is the policy of the Baffin Divisional Board of Education that:

When a parent disagrees with the Individual Education Program she/he may appeal through the following process:

1) Level 1: Parent requests orally or in writing, to the principal, a meeting with the Individual Education Program Team and other persons as requested by either the parent or the principal. This meeting will take place within ten (10) working days of receipt of the request. The principal shall ensure that minutes of this meeting are recorded. Copies of the minutes shall be given to the parents within ten (10) working days after the meeting. If satisfaction is not obtained at this level a level 2 appeal may be requested by the parent.

   Level 2: The parent appeals, in writing, to the Superintendent of Education. Following consultation with the Co-Ordinator/Supervisor of Special Services or the Special Education Consultant, the Superintendent shall respond, in writing, within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal. The Superintendent may:
   (i) Dismiss the appeal and agree with the Individual Education Program;
   (ii) Support the appeal and direct further review and modification of the Individual Education Program.

If satisfaction is not obtained at this level, a level 3 appeal may be requested by the parent.

1) Level 3: The parent appeals, in writing, to the Minister of Education. The Minister shall respond, in writing, to the parent within twenty-one (21) working days of receipt of the appeal.

2) Written records shall be maintained of all meetings and decisions.

3) Parents may request the presence of any chosen advocate at any appeal meeting.

4) The principal shall be responsible for informing the parent about the appeal process.

Each belongs

James A. Hansen, Superintendent of Operations, Hamilton-Wentworth R.C.S.S.B.

A story about Michael...

Michael is a 9-year-old lad with cerebral palsy. He is in a crowded Grade 3 portable classroom at St. Ann's in Ancaster, Ont. Michael gets around in an electric wheelchair, up and down the ramps, even though on snowy days it can be difficult. Michael uses a computer, word processor and typewriter to do all his written work. Some of the highlights of his school year, according to Michael, have been sleep-overs with class friends, birthday parties and participating in a local Cub Scout Group. Michael takes great delight in being able to beat many of the teachers to computer games. Michael has many hopes and dreams for the future, and we are sure that his self-determination will make these dreams become realities.

Michael is one of 25 pupils in our system with severe orthopaedic or physical exceptionalities.

... and about Stephen...

Stephen is a vivacious, spontaneous, 9-year-old who seems to have great potential in music (he claims to have composed a few minuets). This young lad, like his grade four peers, enjoys the challenges of Science Fairs, Public Speaking and Kiwanis Music Festivals. He is also involved in Boy Scouts and Dutch Heritage Language classes. Stephen's innate curiousity and quick-silvered ability to respond is only inhibited by the fact that he was born blind.

Stephen is one of six visually impaired students in our system.

... and Denise...

Denise is a 17-year-old with Down Syndrome who attends her neighbourhood high school, St. Jean de Brebeuf. Denise carries a full academic course load at the Grade 11 level. She has a co-op placement at a Senior Citizens' Home, since she has career ambitions to become a nursing assistant. Denise has a shy smile with adults but just watch her with a group of teenage girls and it is non-stop chatter. Denise has developed into a beautiful young lady, truly aware of her own self worth and dignity.

Reprinted from **Trustee,** Hamilton-Wentworth R.C.S.S.B.

Denise is one of 25 pupils with Down Syndrome in our system.

A story about Tommy...

Tommy is a 7-year-old boy in a grade two class at Holy Family School. He eagerly participates in the various activities around the room... cutting, pasting, printing and experimenting with new ideas. Tommy enjoys the company of his peers and delights in showing off his accomplishments to any visitors. One particular office wall proudly displays a piece of art done by this young lad who is blind in one eye, has only a few tiny stumps for fingers and has proven wrong, the original diagnosis of "severely retarded." The smiles on the faces of caring adults who work with Tommy as he tells time to the minute, reads his books and does his cutting with regular scissors only reinforces the point that in this school Tommy is a unique class member who used to have a behaviour problem.

Tommy is one of a hundred and sixty children in the system who are visited regularly by the Behaviour Resource teachers.

... and one about Matthew...

Matthew is integrated into an active kindergarten classroom where he is accepted by all. Matthew is developmentally delayed and non-verbal. Initially, Matthew had difficulty holding his head up to see his classmates and was not aware of his surroundings. However, his classmates themselves were active participators in teaching Matthew to track objects and raise his head using action toys. All of his friends look forward to their turn to push Matthew in his box chair. It is a joy to see the special relationships that are developing between Matthew and other five-year-olds.

Matthew is one of 41 multi-handicapped children in our system.

... about Paulo

Paulo is a delightful Grade 8 student at St. Teresa of Avila School. Although Paulo is blind, developmentally delayed and has cerebral palsy, he is a very friendly outgoing boy. Paulo is continuing to develop his braille skills, participate in Oral French and work on the computer with his buddy. Paulo has a been sense of humour and an ability to never forget your name once he has heard your voice. Integrating Paulo with his peers has been enriching to all. Next year Paulo will go on to high school and we believe his presence there will continue to exemplify the fact that 'Each Belongs'.

Paul is one of 93 pupils designated as Trainable Retarded in our systems.

... and Lien

Lien is a charming 11-year-old deaf girl who is presently enrolled at Christ The King School. **This is the first school Lien has ever attended,** and it has been a case of 'love at first sight' for everyone. Lien arrived at school without any spoken language, using her own gesture system. Now the principal and all the staff are learning 'Signed English' and in turn teach sign language to their students. Everyone involved with Lien has come up with ingenious ways to encourage oral and sign communication between Lien and her peers. Lien's family is also learning Signed English with weekly tutoring sessions.

Lien is one of 39 chilredn with a hearing impairment in our system.

... then there's Adam...

Adam has attended St. Patrick's School for the past four years. When we look back over those years and look at Adam today, it is hard to believe the gains he has made. The whole class shares in Adam's communication board. Adam is reading and signing along with the words in the stories, and you have to be quick to keep up with him. Adam has been labelled autistic, but his classmates are not concerned about labels because they just know him as their friend Adam.

Adam is one of six autistic children in the system.

They all belong

All of the young people described above have something in common. They "Each Belong". They are in their neighbourhood school, placed age appropriately, in a regular class. They go to school with their brothers and sisters. They have the support necessary to help them grow.

What are these young people doing in our schools? Many of us remember the days when they were not with us. They were, for the most part, at home, or in the public school. We had many seemingly valid reasons at the time. We claimed ... little money, lack of facilities, and absence of specialists, as reason enough to fail to serve. In addition, those youngsters labelled severely developmentally handicapped were excluded from our care by regulation. The privilege of serving these students was left to the public schools. What a change in such a short time! What brought it about?

... and we rejoice

We all continue to rejoice in the Glorious 12th, June the 12th that is, the day that completion was ours. Completion, however, really started earlier with the introduction of Bill 82. For many years, trustees such as Ed Brisbois, Dr. Nick Mancini and staff members, Father Durocher and Chris Asseff, fought, begged, cajoled, and petitioned that separate schools have the privilege of serving those who were developmentally handicapped. They won, and completion of our schools began.

What integration is and is not

The process of bringing all children, able and disabled, together to learn, has come to be called **Integration.** Integration takes place in our board and in many other separate school boards. It is not controversial. It is reality.

Integration becomes controversial when we try to make it what it is not. Integration does not mean all children learn the same thing at the same time, in the same way. Integration does not mean, we 'cure' the child. Integration does not mean we group ten year olds with six and seven year olds. Integration is not an undue burden on the school and the teacher.

Integration means we all have models. Integration means learning from each other. Integration means having our academic needs met according to our achievement level of the moment and have our socialization needs met with our age group. Integration means we learn to rejoice in our own uniqueness as we recognize the uniqueness of others. Integration means we value our ability and accept our limits, as we value the ability of others and help them overcome the limitations. Integration is a joy to teachers, principals and fellow students.

Listen to their words

"They teach us to be understanding and loving, to take each of them as an individual and to overlook what they can't do and focus on what they can. They help us grow and we help them grow... a nice arrangement, isn't it?"

Christine, Grade 7
St. Martin of Tours School

"I don't believe in calling them handicapped children and us normal. Everyone, in their own way, is somehow handicapped. Not one of us is perfect. So, if you are going to call us normal, you should call them normal as well."

Tisha, Grade 8,
Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha School

"My present teaching assignment has provided a second opportunity to work on the integration of a Down Syndrome child to the regular school routine.

Josie's teachers and classmates alike, gain emotionally, socially, and perhaps, spiritually from her presence. There is no doubt that Josie is among the truly 'gifted' children because she retains the gifts of innocence, trust and pure happiness, that perhaps, many of us have lost."

Colm Harty,
Special Education Teacher,
St. Teresa of Avila School

"Why integration? Why not? Each student must be given all the opportunities to grow spiritually, socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually in his or her own school community with his or her peers. Not to be able to participate in any of the above areas of growth can surely affect their self-worth.

Let us continue and expand integration, but let us also attempt to eliminate the labelling of children."

Fred Susi, Principal
St. Brigid's School.

"I feel that the most gratifying aspect of the integration process is the natural way in which the school community has accepted the children and the degree of normalization achieved simply because they belong to their own school in their community."

Mr. E. Mazur, Principal,
St. Agnes School

"In my six years at Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, I have learned that mentally and physically disabled children are the most loving, giving, and beautiful people that God ever made. They have taught me a great deal about dealing with the handicapped. I am grateful for this very important lesson from our very 'special' people."

Mrs. Dianna Dunn, Secretary,
Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha School

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus is present where, "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

Archbishop Pocock has told us a Catholic school is one in which Jesus is present. Integration makes Jesus present in our schools.

Good schools provide a good education. Good education provides for all students. Special Education is a state of mind. It is good teaching. It is not a program. It is not a curriculum. It is all programs. It is all curriculum.

In a period of two years, over 500 parents, teachers, principals, trustees, school administrators, and other professionals, have visited our schools. These visitors have come from as far away as New Zealand, Australia, Israel, and parts of the U.S.A. They have come from every province in Canada except P.E.I. and Saskatchewan. They have come from almost every board in Ontario. In addition, our staff has provided direct and indirect in-service to boards, parent groups, universities and associations in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, The North West Territories, and of course Ontario.

The visitors continue to come. The request for in-service increases. We really wonder what all the fuss is about because some day, all boards will respond as a matter of course, to the legitimate request of all parents, that their children be permitted to be full members of the neighbourhood school community. It is a great joy to note that many separate school boards are well down this path and many more are beginning their journey. Our public school brothers, whose concern for children is no less than ours, are also beginning to change.

THE CHILDREN

Education Waterloo-style

Marsha Forest and Mary Mayer

On August 1, 1985 George Flynn became the new Director of the Waterloo County Roman Catholic Separate School Board which has 17,000 students and 1100 teachers and an annual budget of approximately $60 million with $30 million in construction. George is known to the parent movement as an avid supporter of integrated education and everyone who knew of his dedication and commitment to quality education for all children looked forward to what was going to happen in the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

Prior to the appointment of George Flynn another key actor in the Kitchener story came on the scene -- Father Patrick Mackan (who had been working with people with disabilities in Bermuda) returned to carry on his work in Canada. Father Pat's "mission" was to assist in the integration of students at St. Jerome's High School.

These two powerful leaders, both of whom had a clear vision of the kind of community they wanted to see, set in motion an energy that is making all kinds of people want to move to the Waterloo Region.

Their dream is clear: create a school system that is complete -- a system where no one is apart from (i.e., segregated), but where all were part of the community (i.e., integrated). Their motto: we all belong.

This clear vision meant that all children had strengths and unique needs. It meant in practice, that all children are gifted and that traditional labelling is both unnecessary and harmful. It meant, most of all, that diversity and differentness are valued, appreciated and cherished in this school system. No throw-away kids here.

In practice, a five-year plan (which is ahead of schedule) was put in place to move all children into their local neighbourhood schools with appropriate service as needed. This meant financial, professional and moral support to all involved.

Currently, four schools serve as models for the entire system -- two high schools -- St. Jerome's and St. Mary's and two elementary schools -- St. Francis' and St. Joseph's. These four schools serve as examples of what can

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happen when strong leadership, dedication, commitment and most of all clear values are present in a community.

The "magic" that is going on in Waterloo county is based on putting a dream into action with a team based model where all the key actors are going in the same direction. Deeds, not words, are the driving force.

A new director brings change to a system and many of the changes that George Flynn recommended created tension and conflict. There is no change without waves and turbulence, but George weathered a challenging first year and is moving into his second year with a re-energized school system ready to take up the challenge. New blood is being attracted to a board where love, respect and dignity are the values being put into practice.

If you visit don't expect to see superhuman martyrs or saints dashing about -- you'll see ordinary people doing common sense things that are good the the education of **all** our children. Everything is not under control. All the answers haven't been found. It is a system that is daring to risk, encouraging creativity, rewarding innovation and hard work, and not pandering to the mediocre. If you visit, you'll see a process of growth, you'll feel a direction, and you'll sense a spirit of exploration, change and excitement.

The St. Jerome's Story

Prior to 1986, special education at St. Jerome's (an elite academic all boys school) meant room 106 -- the room at the far end of the hall with the stove, mini-fridge, rug hooking area, craft area and sofa. Snowflakes, clowns and pictures of baby animals adorned the room. It was jokingly referred to as the "Snowflake room" by the boys in the "real" part of the school. Boys and girls attended room 106. The girls in the room were the only female students in this all boys high school.

Integration, prior to 1986, meant that "the life skills" kids were sent to art, music or gym. A few "regular" students volunteered to do "charity" work in room 106 but contact with the larger community was minimal. There were "Life Skills" outings for "retarded" bowling, swimming, skating and horseback riding.

The staff of room 106 were as isolated, segregated and rejected as the students and were totally forgotten when school activities were planned. It was THEM and US. In fact, the teachers were the first real casualties with one "burning out" in November 1984 and another taking leave due to a serious mental breakdown in March 1985.

Were the adults involved in all this monsters, demons or unfeeling, horrible people? Were the "professionals" out to destroy and maim their students? Of course not. In fact, just the opposite was true. The beloved Father Mike Cundari (who died in a tragic car accident in Nov. 1986) was a gentle, energetic and dedicated educator respected throughout Canada. Father Mike believed he was doing what was best.

Enter Father Pat. Pat gave Mike a new vision. He took Mike to see integration in action and instigated Mike and several key people in Kitchener to attend one of the integration workshops run at The G. Allan Roeher Institute. Mike was convinced. He had no false pride and thus no trouble admitting he had made an error. He set out to right what he considered to be a grievous wrong and he didn't wait another 100 years to do so. He became a champion for integration. A few steps were taken immediately. The girls in the life skills room were sent to St. Mary's (the girl's school across the street). St. Mary's key personnel were made part of a new Integration Team headed by both principals (Sister Barbara and Father Mike).

Mike Schmidtt, the teacher in charge of the "enrichment" program was hired to head up a new resource program. Mike volunteered because the job sounded like a challenge. He was chosen because he had the respect of his fellow teachers and the reputation of being a sound educator. He also knew the school inside out as he had once been a student there himself. He was not an expert on mental handicap -- he had no preconceived notions of what the students could or could not do. He was open, flexible and a risk taker.

Mike chose the most central spot in the school for the new learning centre -- a place for all students with unique needs -- be it extra work in Latin, reading and writing tutorials, math remediation, etc. The room is located between the main office and the staff lounge so that every teacher has to pass by every day. To my great joy, the old room 106 was converted into two vice-principals' offices!

That spring (1986) Father Mike called a meeting of the entire staff to tell them his plans and vision for the students in room 106. He inspired them with his new dream of a complete community. About 75 teachers sat in absolute silence. Rumours had been running rampant. Now everyone knew all the rumours were true.

"Is it true we're going to get students with even higher needs than the ones we've got now?" Father Mike answered, "Yes!" "Is it true the math department is going to have to move because of these changes?" Again he answered, "Yes!" "Is it true we're all going to have to teach these kids?"

"Yes!" "But Father Mike," one teacher moaned, "how will we do it?" "I don't have a clue," laughed Mike Cundari. "Mike Schmidt is going to be looking after all that -- let's ask him."

All eyes turned to Mike, who quietly told the teachers that he was scared too, and also excited. He promised not to dump any student on a teacher without a lot of discussion and support.

On the whole, the teachers were not angry, they were scared -- and scared was okay because it was a new venture. It was also not negotiable. They were going to do it because it was the right thing to do for their community. Father Mike promised both internal and external support. Bernie Falwell, the then associate principal, was as enthusiastic as Mike. Bernie is now the principal of St. Jerome's and is carrying the vision forward. Another Bernie, Bernie Kowalczyk-McPhee, an assistant superintendent of special services, was an invaluable resource and ally from the central board office.

The integration team decided to invite Norman Kunc to do the final staff meeting of the year for both St. Mary's and St. Jerome's. Norman tells his own personal story of growing up as a child with cerebral palsy. Norman himself went from segregation to integration and with humour and passion equates segregation with spiritual and physical death.

Norm's message to the teachers was that it was okay to be afraid and okay to fail if they kept on trying. He made them look at themselves and both laugh and cry. His message was profound yet simple -- "Let us in!"

In retrospect, I feel several factors were critical in making St. Jerome's such a resounding success:

1. A clear vision on the part of the school principal of what he wanted his school to look like.

2. The courage of Father Mike to admit that what they had done in the past was not good enough for the future.

3. The building of a working team chaired by the school's principal and involving all the key actors.

4. The use of outside consultants who acted as "cheer leaders" and who broadened the issue from the one school to the larger society.

5. The support of the Director.

6. Use of high school students as peer helpers and friends.

7. Changing the role of the "aides" to that of "community facilitators".

8. Encouraging a creative work experience component.

9. Continuous in-service, open discussion and support.

10. Most of all, a school principal who could laugh at himself and make his staff laugh and cry with him.

The integration team worries that many schools will go the route of hiring "mental retardation" experts and specialists to run "special education type" programs. The team feels this is a recipe for failure. At St. Jerome's and St. Mary's the best teachers are the ones who have no preconceived notions, who are most flexible and who are open to knowing that there are no magic recipes, just a willingness to grow.

The following stories by Mary Mayer, one of the teachers in the Learning Centre, say it all. Mary tells the stories as she feels her students would if they could speak and/or write. Mary has the right to do this, based on her real and lasting relationship with them.

Steven's story

After two years of being with Mary and a group of fifteen kids labelled EMR or TMR, Mary talked to my mom and said that I was getting too old to stay at St. Francis. It was time to graduate to high school. To my surprise, Mary was at the high school when I got there. I smiled and kicked my heels in the wheelchair. She kissed me. She did that at the other school too, especially when no one was looking. I really trust her.

The bathroom in the school wasn't ready so she changed me in the principal's office. Sometimes he would help. He always smiled. I heard Mary say, "Your office is the only private place with curtains. May we use it as a temporary bathroom?" He laughed and said that he'd call the people to finish the construction immediately. Mary is really smart.

At first I was always with Mary. Slowly she showed the other teachers how to help me. I found the school noisy but I enjoyed it.

A lot more people said hello to me and some noticed that I got a new wheelchair. I smiled at them to let them know I was glad they spoke to me. Mary

showed them how I can shake hands.

At first, the same guy brought me into the school every morning but later other guys passing by took me to classes. They all knew my name. I smiled at them.

I've talked a lot about Mary and I better make things clear, she is not my only teacher nor does she stay with me all the time anymore. She teaches other classes too. I've even learned to trust other people with the job of changing me. Deb, Kevin and Michael, who also teach with Mary, started helping her from the beginning. I could tell they were frightened. They could tell I wasn't comfortable either, but we all learned to trust one another. Kevin is a crazy guy. He makes me laugh even without tickling. Before coming to St. Jerome's, he had never changed a diaper. We don't have a lifting machine in our washroom, so two people help me onto the table. I love when people help me.

I go to all of the assemblies in the school, eat lunch in the cafeteria and basically 'hang out' wherever the action is.

Teachers and students are all welcomed into the Learning Resource Centre. More and more people drop by to talk and laugh.

I went to my first annual review for my program next year. Mary told me where we were going but after they carried me up the six steps and put me into a chair, I began to cry. Mary and Michael sat close to me. I stopped crying and we began to plan for next year. I can hardly wait!

Here is what my timetable looks like:

Period	Day 1	Day 2
1	Go to the cafeteria and buy a muffin and milk. Visit with the guys there. Go to the bathroom and get out of the wheelchair.	
1A	Home room	Home room.
2	Religion	Library
3	Learning Resource Room	Typing
4	Computer	Shop

Robert's story

I started high school in the days of the Life Skills class. Two teachers got sick and a supply teacher took over for a while. My story before coming to St. Jerome's is a lot like Steven's. I went to schools for the retarded and didn't speak until I was eight years old. When I did speak, I only used one or two words at a time.

I lived at home until last year, but now I live in a twenty-eight bed institution because I was hitting at home. I was angry at my family and wouldn't even look at their pictures because they put me there. I loved when they took me home for the weekend. I still make them upset when I break windows or dig up the blacktop on the driveway.

People say that I'm retarded. Many times I have seizures and the pills that I take sometimes make me do strange things. I get angry, hit and break things. They say I'm low functioning. I use two voices -- a high one and a low one.

I started back to school in September and a bunch of new teachers were there. The classrooms were different and more guys were around. Guys came to take me to classes and made sure I was OK. Mary gave me a timetable that looked like this:

Period	Day 1	Day 2
1	Family studies	Woodworking
1A	Home room	Home room
2	Typing	Learning Centre
3	Art	Computer
4	Gym	Gym

I know my schedule inside out. Mary says I know it better than she does. I like to make her laugh.

At first I didn't talk much but being around the guys and in class, I had to talk or else. Bit by bit, other people noticed me and listened to what I had to say. For years no one seemed to notice me unless I talked baby-talk or broke things. Things are really different now.

I love people and in my new classes I am with all sorts of guys. Sometimes I go downtown for lunch, other times I stay at school, but I get to choose. Mary makes me choose things all the time. She's the person I go to when I have a problem.

I don't learn like everyone else, but I love people

People have stopped calling me weird. Now they call me Rob.

I started a job this year delivering the "Market Place News" once a week. Colleen, a new friend, walks with me. She reminds me what I need to do. She shows me how to fold the papers and which house to do next. I got paid and I got to choose what I wanted to buy.

In computer class, I have my own program. The teacher didn't know what I could do, but Mary and Deb showed him. Slowly the teacher began to sit closer to me. Now he calls me Rob (not Robbie).

One day, Mary called another teacher, Michael, when he was at home sick. She let me talk. I never had the chance to talk on the phone before. I felt good. I made Mike laugh. He came to work the next day and thanked me for cheering him up.

Mary's story

It was my first year teaching at the high school. Prior to that I taught in an elementary school. I taught in a Life Skills class for two years, team-teaching with another teacher and three teachers' assistants. I have been teaching in various elementary schools for seven years. As I was born and raised in Waterloo, many of the teachers at St. Jerome's remember having taught me.

As a new teacher at St. Jerome's, my plan was to be as visible as possible. I attended staff functions outside school and helped out on committees. I also began teaching other classes. Often I'd help the other students in the classes where Robert and Steven attended. The other Learning Resource team members assumed similar responsibilities. We found that initially the teachers were reluctant to have us in their rooms but eventually the partnerships worked out well.

On September 30, 1986, Marsha Forest came to talk to the staff of St. Mary's and St. Jerome's High Schools. She spoke about the Kaleidoscope Model of integration and her own experiences going from segregation to integration. I laughed so hard I cried. This was the first real professional development I had for years. I was able to laugh at all of the "crazy" things I had done in the past. The talk also reinforced the ideas in my heart. Somehow I managed to shut out the total picture and simply continued trying to make changes in the people within my classroom instead of in the system.

Her talk set the tone for the school year. As team members, we, the Learning Resource teachers, had to ask ourselves, "Is this a retarded activity?" before we planned each day. My primary response was to plan for the most challenging students.

I showed eveyone on our team how to help Steven and I began to see his world open. He began to trust the other teachers. He smiled and reached out for them. I was so proud.

When Robert came to the school he only uttered the occasional word. A friend drew pictures of objects that I thought would motivate him and helped to build his vocabulary. We'd review each one and Robert would try to use them in a sentence. He caught on very quickly and seemed to enjoy the fact that the adults in the room were really listening to him. He now had a reason to talk.

Soon Robert had a full timetable with variety. In his former files, teachers commented on his poor skills and disabilities. We selected his courses to develop his strengths and found the best teachers -- his peers.

Our team had its growing pains, too. With so many people coming and going, communication often broke down and misunderstandings arose. But our common bond, our students, kept us together.

With hard work the department became credible. We gave in-service sessions, helped teachers find material and support them.

The administration encouraged us and began to receive requests from other schools and parents to see our model. Tour after tour visited us. Teachers joked about the publicity surrounding the Learning Centre but we helped them realize that the entire St. Jerome's School Community was being recognized, not just the one aspect.

Ted symbolizes the changes at St. Jerome's. He came to us with the label "trainable retarded." Ted is a person with Down Syndrome. He comes from a family of twelve and he loves people. He was given a full timetable of History, Math, Gym, Drama, Instrumental music, Religion and English. His work placement was in the school library.

One lunch hour, Ted's usual lunch friend couldn't make it so Ted walked up to the table known as the "jock's table" where the football team ate. Approaching the biggest football player he asked, "Can I eat with you guys?" The over-six-foot player stood up, carried over a chair for Ted and put it on his immediate left.

Great things were happening with the students all over the school. The support circle, originally used during school time, began to spill over into other areas. Ted's mom phoned in shock because a fellow students in Ted's math class asked her son to join the other guys on the weekend. This was his first call from a friend. From that point on, Ted's social calendar blossomed.

The peer group that worked on a volunteer basis taking students to class, lunch, etc. has been a major factor in the success of the program. They have

reached out to Steven, Ted and Robert and in the process have learned about themselves. These young men are an energetic group that never asked why I wanted something done but always replied, "Sure, why not?"

The St. Jerome's administration as well as the school board administrators have backed us every step of the way. They have played a key role in the success of this program.

There is no magic in the Waterloo Regional Separate School Board. There is nothing special about St. Jerome's. Our teachers are no better or worse than at any other school. All of us directly involved believe that school is for everyone. Without integration we have a segregated school -- a segregated community.

What's happening at St. Jerome's is not perfect but it is a start. Any school can do what we do and it is our responsibility to make it happen in other places. Come visit us.

Don't believe a word I say. (After all, I'm prejudiced, as I act as a consultant to the integration team of this Board. I am proud of that job and proud to be considered a part of the team.) I urge the reader to invite these marvelous people to visit your school system or parent group. Better yet, come visit them. They are ready and willing to share their story -- not tell you what to do -- but to share the direction they are taking.

I want to reflect for a moment on the chain of events that led George Flynn to his current position and to his current vision. He is truly taking national and international leadership on the issue of community integrated education for all. What led him there, among other things, was a young child named Maria Galati. George was the superintendent of special education in Toronto who risked his career by allowing a little kindergarten child to attend a regular neighbourhood school. The beauty of the welcome that Maria received from the other children and the gift that Maria brought to St. Michael's changed many of us, including Maria's parents, Rose and Dom Galati, myself and George Flynn.

It is important to remember that it is the children who are the real heroes of this story -- they are the next generation -- a generation that hopefully will not know the pain and isolation of segregated education, but experience the joy of being welcome like their brothers and sisters.

Sabrina & Adrian

Marsha Forest

Sabrina is seven years old and attends St. Vincent de Paul School in Hamilton, Ontario. She is in the second grade but uses the whole school as her learning environment. The hallways, cafeteria and even the principal's office provide opportunities for learning. Why is Sabrina's story so interesting? Because a few years ago, the thought of a regular school education for Sabrina would have been considered a pipe-dream. Instead, because of the work of the Hamilton-Wentworth Separate School Board, she is able to attend her neighbourhood school and receive a quality education in an integrated environment.

There is no question that Sabrina has challenging needs. In fact, during Sabrina's first year at the school, her self-abusive behaviour was intense and quite disruptive. Nevertheless, after spending a year in a regular Grade 1 class with a responsive teacher, an excellent aide and a caring team of consultants, Sabrina entered Grade 2 with few of these behaviour problems.

How are Sabrina's challenging needs met? Simple -- the principal, Lorne Funnell, calls together a team of all the people involved with the child. This includes the special education consultant, the behaviour management consultant, the language and speech consultant, the classroom teacher, the assistant, Sabrina's mother, the social worker and any other interested people. They determine what Sabrina's needs are and create a personalized plan of action for the child.

Betty Browne, the special education consultant summarized the "good things" happening for Sabrina:

- Sabrina is using the communication book. She has four words: eat, drink, toilet and music. Music is not well established at this time. She is making more sounds. Some of the vocalization sound like words -- no, hi.
- Self-abusive behaviours have decreased significantly. We noted that self-abuse decreases when Sabrina is busy and stimulated.
- Sabrina is screaming less.
- Sabrina is able to make eye contact and keep it for longer periods of time (up to a minute at times).
- Her table manners have improved greatly. Sabrina is using for fork now.
- We have found some things Sabrina likes:
  - trips
  - big toys at the playground

- dancing
- record player on low

The team has agreed on the following priorities for the upcoming school year:

- Continuing Sabrina's communication program -- expanding picture board and expanding oral production. Communicating by waving hello and good-bye.
- Helping Sabrina learn to follow single directions for the educational assistant, augmentative teachers and the home room teacher.
  Examples: take something when handed it, open door upon request.
- Helping Sabrina in toilet training -- the school will continue to take Sabrina every 30-45 minutes. The mother asked that the school limit the amount of fluids Sabrina is getting.
- Helping Sabrina to socialize by participating in more class activities. Example: listening to a story without inappropriate behaviours towards peers. The team felt this is a very important area because a very real danger for Sabrina is that she may be rejected by her peers and relegated to an isolated program away from other children. The home room teacher agreed to have more class discussions about ways of including Sabrina. Building friendships and relationships is the most important aspect of the program this year.

In many school systems Sabrina would be labelled automatically as "autistic/TMR" and placed in a self-contained classroom. Here, at St. Vincent's she is part of the real world where she is learning to form relationships, to communicate and to be part of a typical school community.

Adrian is a 13-year old Grade 8 student at Blessed Kateri School. He is a beautiful boy with shining eyes and a forceful personality. At times, however, Adrian's behaviour becomes erratic and other people have a great deal of difficulty dealing with it. As a result, potential friends are being driven away and teachers are losing patience.

Adrian's mother and the school principal, Tony Tigani, were becoming worried that Adrian's behaviour would either land him in a correctional facility or in an institution. The main problem seemed to be that Adrian had no friends.

The principal called together a meeting of the team involved with Adrian so that his personal plan of action could be reviewed and revised. The team began by going through a typical day for Adrian and looking at the times he seemed to be out of control. They also made lists of his strengths and needs.

They determined that Adrian likes to work with numbers and the computer; work in the kitchen and use the dishwasher; make sandwiches; make mechanical

objects and other items he can manipulate; go to church; ride his bicycle; swim and watch wrestling on TV.

The team brainstormed on how to get Adrian actively involved in the community more often by capitalizing on his strengths and using his high levels of energy. Some ideas were:

Community activities	Skills to be gained
shopping	reading, money
racquetball	recreation, job possibility
bicycling	exercise
trampoline	exercise
bakery	job experience
church	job experience
bowling	recreation, job experience
paper route	recreation, job experience

The program was designed with the goal of preparing Adrian for high school the following year.

For the out-of-school activities (community-based instruction) Adrian would be teamed up with one or two other so-called "typical" kids who needed individual attention or some "time away" from the school. The out-of-school time for Adrian would be used to teach him independent travel and good work skills. The work skills would be practised in the place Adrian loved most -- his church. In analyzing Adrian, everyone agreed his favourite environment was the church. Therefore, to build on this strength, the first community experience would be in the church, assisting the priest in a variety of jobs. The team also developed several in-school jobs like washing the lunch tables. Adrian could routinely do this along with two other Grade 8 students.

What was striking at this point was that not once in this team meeting was the focus on how difficult Adrian is. No one raised an IQ score or was overly concerned that Adrian takes seizure medication three times a day. Everyone was genuinely concerned about how to make the program serve Adrian's needs and how the program could be improved. No one talked about "fixing" Adrian. The focus was on the program and how to creatively and imaginatively meet Adrian's challenging needs.

The principal volunteered to go to the Grade 8 class the next day to discuss the difficulty Adrian was having making friends. This proactive stance on the part of Tony Tigani is not one seen too often in schools. It is a joy to joy to see a school principal who shows so much active concern.

The following plan emerged that would run for four months and be revised by the team when necessary.

Note: Adrian has two teachers. Doreen Horbach is his Grade 8 teacher who works in cooperation and consultation with Joanne Gera who is the special education resource teacher. Joanne's room is called the Home Ec. Centre and Adrian goes to Joanne during the day for some of his activities. He is based, however, in the regular Grade 8 classroom.

9:00 - 9:30 Adrian attends his home room class for the start of the day and for religion class.

9:30 - 10:30 Language Arts Block. Adrian does his work in the home room class. The program (word recognition, word banks, computerized reading program) is supplied by Joanne. Adrian is assisted by two Grade 8 buddies. He also spends time on the computer and is assisted on this by another computer buddy.
(If his behaviour is inappropriate he goes to the Home Ec. room, calms down and then returns to his home room base.)

10:30 - 10:45 Recess
Due to the aggressive intervention of Tony Tigani, a real friend was found for Adrian who will make sure Adrian has a good recess. Adrian and Robert have now become real friends and Robert rides his bike to Adrian's home after school where they play computer games together. We have no hard data on this but it seems that Adrian's behaviour has improved noticeably since Robert has become a friend.

10:45 - 11:05 Silent Reading
This is a difficult time for Adrian but the teachers feel it is important for him to learn to be quiet and spend some time without a lot of noisy stimulation. While other Grade 8 students read, Adrian is also learning to read or to leaf through age-appropriate teen magazines, newspapers and books.

11:05 - 11:55 Math
This time slot is also programmed by Joanne. Adrian is using a calculator for addition, subtraction, and multiplication. He is very interested in this and is good at it. He is also working on telling time to the quarter hour with a Grade 8 math buddy. When his work is done he and three other Grade 8 students set up the lunch room for the younger children.

Noon: Adrian goes home for lunch with his sisters and brothers.

1:10 - 1:25 The home room class has a French period and Adrian goes to Joanne for individualized speech programming. Joanne reports that when Adrian arrived at the school three years ago he had no

form of communication. He had been in a school for children with mental handicaps and refused to communicate with anyone except his family. Joanne states that today "he makes himself known to everyone in the school through gestures, signs and now speech. If you have the patience you can understand his speech." Joanne is working on articulation and simple sentences with Adrian. He enjoys this time with Joanne and is progressing well in this area. He has no inflection in his voice and they are also working on this. Adrian was introduced to a Bliss board which he refused to use since he prefers the speech mode of communication. He will use signs but is mostly using speech and gestures.

1:25 - 2:15 Arts Block -- Adrian attends music, art, gym, drama on a rotary with the rest of the class.

2:15 - 2:30 Recess

2:30 - 3:30 This can be a difficult time for Adrian. A variety of activities go into this time slot. Once a week Adrian works on the computer and is learning a variety of tracking and motor skills. One day a week he travels by public transportation to the nearby church to assist the priest in his chores. This will be expanded to twice a week depending on how it works. Other activities at this period include auditory skill learning, i.e., listening to tapes and following directions or doing crafts. Adrian also has a variety of chores to complete within the school, i.e., mail delivery to two teachers, library help and lunch room cleanup. This is done with other Grade 8 students who also have these responsibilities.

The stories of these two children are excellent illustrations of what goes on at the Hamilton-Wentworth Separate School Board. Although the system is not perfect, it is heading in a direction that most school systems have not yet even dreamed of.

Phil DiFrancesco, the Coordinator of Special Education says, "No kid should be just sitting in a room with no friends and no contacts. We have to work harder to develop these relationships." At a time of more testing, more labels and more regulations, this is a refreshing reminder that all we need to do is really care about kids and create program teams that can plan creatively. If Adrian and Sabrina can be part of the system in Hamilton then surely any school board can do the same. The issue is the desire to do so -- it is neither money nor special equipment.

Start with the right attitude:
Sabrina revisited

Marsha Forest

Early last year (in **entourage,** Winter 1986) I reported on the story of a Hamilton, Ont. girl who was given the chance to learn with her friends in a regular school despite labels like "autistic" and "severely to profoundly retarded" given to her by her doctors. Medical and educational professionals recommended Sabrina be placed in a residential setting for autistic children and have special education in a segregated school. But the Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic School Board prepared itself for the challenge of Sabrina and accepted her at the St. Vincent de Paul School. A team, including the teachers and her mother, has fostered her progress.

I recently visited Sabrina in her new school in a new neighbourhood. She is now a student in the grade 4-5 class in St. Jerome School. I hadn't seen her for almost a year and the change in her made me quite speechless. Sabrina shot up like a sprout. A beautiful 9-year-old, tall and thin, she dresses in trendy jeans and t-shirts and sneakers.

When I arrived Sabrina was working with two classmates on an art project. The three of them had blue lips and yellow hands from the paints. They were dipping vegetables in the paints and making designs.

After about ten minutes Sabrina pointed to her polaroid photograph of the school bathroom indicating her need to go to the washroom. Jenny, the educational assistant, walked with Sabrina to the washroom. When they returned, Jenny filled out the check list she and the special education teacher designed to chart Sabrina's progress with her bathroom routine. For the first time, Sabrina has control with this simple and consistent approach. The tattered and obviously well-used photograph is with Sabrina at all times. It sits on her table as she works or moves with her to other activity stations.

At 10:15 Sabrina has a direct teaching session with Pat Ben, the school's special education teacher. She co-ordinates Sabrina's progress along with the classroom teacher and the educational assistant. The special education teacher helps with any student who requires special help. She is not a specialist in autism or mental retardation -- she is simply a first-rate teacher.

Pat Ben enjoys helping Sabrina, who is a challenge for her. She bubbles

with enthusiasm wanting to show me every goal and objective, every chart, everything Sabrina can do. To Pat, Sabrina is a marvellous child with enormous potential. She, the teacher and the educational assistant designed simple checklists to chart Sabrina's progress and record problem areas. Pat discovered a bladder infection through the bathroom checklist because of careful attention to the system. Sabrina's educational team says she wouldn't be doing as well as she is if it weren't for other dedicated and talented teachers and assistants who worked with her in the past.

In the tutorial area I watched in awe as Sabrina did things even I would have thought impossible just one year ago. Sabrina can sit at a table across from Pat and complete a colour matching exercise, put together an age-appropriate, adapted puzzle, and work on the computer.

I sat with tears in my eyes feeling both happy and angry. Happy that Sabrina was doing so well, happy that at least here in Hamilton kids were treated with all the dignity and respect they deserved -- yet angry that everyone didn't have this opportunity and angry at school systems that blame and label kids instead of teaching them and loving them.

Sabrina has truly become a full and accepted part of the grade 4-5 class at St. Jerome. Her peers treat her quite naturally and help her on the computer, in art and in any other subject. These students, our next generation of leaders and citizens, benefit the most. Just by accepting Sabrina in their homes, communities and hearts, they learn valuable morals.

Partly because of her peers' attitudes, Sabrina has an individualized, common sense day that flows from her own natural rhythms. A curriculum is not imposed on Sabrina but developed for her and her alone by the educational team.

Sabrina has gone from being a wild and frantic child who screamed and rocked and abused her own body to a beautiful 9-year-old who is starting to make interesting communicative whistles and clicks. She walks on her own and has contact with students and teachers in the school.

She still has the occasional tantrum or outburst, but it hardly happens any more.

In the past, our greatest concern was the rejection of Sabrina because of her anti-social behaviour. The children used to be afraid of her because she isolated herself in her own little world. Sabrina needed the ordinary more than anything else. An ordinary, natural and common sense approach broke through the wall she had built against the world. Now Sabrina has come out of her shell and

has accepted the strong and persistent invitation over the past four years to join our world. People ask me about children who are self-abusive, abusive to others and who have tantrums ad nauseum. This was Sabrina and we see how love and care helped her enter our world. Everyone from the bottom up was involved in achieving this and now we are all grappling with making sure the acceptance expands into the community.

The dream of the school and other advisors is to build a circle of friends that carries over to the home in the evenings and on weekends.

Although we may think of Sabrina's story as something exciting and unusual, the Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic School Board and the teachers accept it as the norm. "After all," says Jim Hansen, superintendent of supervision and operations at the board, "These people are just doing their jobs and are well-paid to do it." He expects the most of his staff and his students, but he also provides support when it's needed.

Although Sabrina's mother has been encouraged to turn to parent relief and respite programs, she has refused them. But she needs support which will soon come from a new team that is setting up the next phase. I'm confident my next update on Sabrina will describe the success of this team and Sabrina's life after school.

Attitudes count

Here is a recipe for success in achieving educational integration like Sabrina's. Each ingredient is essential.

1. A clear educational policy and vision that all children belong to their communities.
2. A statement that no child is too difficult to deal with if a professional team with a common vision comes together for planning.
3. A sense that all children have gifts to offer the community.
4. A belief that all problems have many solutions.
5. A belief that parent involvement and input are vital.
6. Confidence, conviction and commitment in what one is doing.
7. An acceptance that risks must be taken and mistakes must be made.
8. An acceptance that you can't play God.
9. A belief in the dignity and potential of all of us including teachers and parents.
10. A belief that school systems can and will adapt and change as they see integration working.

THE TEACHERS

Just one of the kids

Marsha Forest

In September 1983, three new children were enrolled at St. Michael's Elementary School of the Toronto Separate School Board. The children were considered to have very challenging needs and had been in segregated situations.

The principal of the school, Sister Loretta Pickett, was nervous but welcoming and took the attitude of "We'll try it and see."

One of the children was Maria Galati. The other two children were Darren and Stephanie who were placed in the senior kindergarten and are now in a mixed Grade 2-3.

Although I would never recommend placing two children with challenging needs in one classroom, this was necessary due to the small size of the school and the age of the children.

The following interview is with Stephanie's and Darren's teacher who, as you will read, was originally against having the children in her classroom. Claudia Dicorsi is an outstanding example of how a good teacher can indeed teach any child.

The interview also carries an important message for parents. Integration is new, and in many cases terrifying for teachers. To expect teachers, who are trained in traditional and conventional teachers' colleges to suddenly fling their doors wide open to all children, is naive. Of course some teachers will, but most are scared and if we give them time, space and **support**, what happened to Stephanie, Darren and Claudia can happen for all of us.

Marsha: How did you introduce Darren and Stephanie to typical kids?

Claudia: When I first had Darren and Stephanie in the classroom, I was completely in the dark so I instantly tapped as many resources as possible. I was most afraid of their physical disabilities so I found the board's occupational therapist most helpful. She taught me how to hold, position and touch the children and then I taught everything I learned to the other kids in my class.

I never lectured the children. I remember asking them, "What's important about being a child?" They responded, "to move" and "to play." I then asked them what Darren and Stephanie needed and again they said, "to move" and "to play." Once more I asked them if we could do that with Stephanie and Darren. "Of course," they replied as if I were silly to ask. "All we have to do is get them out of their wheelchairs and on the floor and then they can move and play." That's what we did and that was the start.

We all learned how to hold and position Darren and Stephanie in order to take them out of their chairs and put them on the floor. Once the kids could get close to Darren and Stephanie I didn't have to do much more, it just happened. Children by instinct are very attracted to other children and they started to do things with Darren and Stephanie that were very typical. When Darren moved his hand John would say, "Darren touched me. He wants to be near me." Or, "Darren threw my pencil off my desk." The children interpreted the actions of Darren and Stephanie as real communication.

The main state of consistency in the lives of all the children are their peers. Every year the staff changes, but the child population is quite constant.

Marsha: How did you feel at the beginning of this project?

Claudia: I was not keen on this at all. I was one of the people not committed to integration. In fact, I was totally against this project at the beginning. I felt I didn't have enough training and that I was incapable of meeting the special kinds of needs of Darren and Stephanie. My perception of their needs was that they needed special this and special that and I didn't feel I could do that. But once they arrived, once they are with you -- and I started to see them as children, I saw they were basically like anybody else. Their needs were the needs of all children.

What took place was far more worthwhile than I knew -- worthwhile in terms of acceptance, dealing with people, commitment, and a great deal of joy! One day I asked my class, "Do Darren and Stephanie belong here or anywhere else?" and they all said, "No, they belong with us!"

Marsha: What is stopping other teachers from doing what you do?

Claudia: I think many teachers are locked into a curriculum. The Ministry of Education has fostered this. Teachers today are overwhelmed by the amount of content that has to be taught. But most teachers can do this if they have support and encouragement.

Marsha: What changed your attitudes?

Claudia: I took this on as a challenge because I was so deadly opposed to it. My own fear was the major problem. The fear factor was working at its best. At first having Darren and Stephanie was like having two new people coming into your house. It disrupts your life for a while and then the people become part of the family. That's exactly what happened. Darren and Stephanie are now members of our family and that's exactly the way they are treated. The typical children give them hell just like anybody else. If Darren doesn't co-operate the children talk to him and I encourage them to do so. If Darren has behaviour that's off the wall, the kids talk to him just as they would to anyone else in the class. This is very healthy because Darren responds to the other children even more than to me.

I think an integration program works better if you have a two-year commitment from the staff. I am now very comfortable and a quality program is in place. It took time and I'm glad I'll have the children for two years.

Education today is taking a very individualized approach and more and more I see that the typical children have as many so-called "handicaps" and needs as anybody else -- it's just in varying degrees. Activity-based programs are easy to integrate. I've become a real advocate for integration.

Marsha: What changed you from negative to positive?

Claudia: I guess my confidence increased. Both Darren and Stephanie were very wheelchair-bound and passive when they arrived. As a teacher I knew all children need movement to keep everything in working order. Once the occupational therapist helped me get them out of their chairs, made them easily accessible to me physically and more involved, everything started changing.

Marsha: What advice would you give to teachers?

Claudia: Teachers need to see that it's no big deal. They need to see videos of integration in action -- to see the real Stephanie on the floor with the other kids who are doing math work, for example, while I'm telling Stephanie to "sit up" for body control.

Marsha: How did you deal with seizures?

Claudia: At first the kids were a little frightened by Darren's seizures but I explained to them that when Darren has a seizure, it's going to last about seven minutes and he'll be tired but okay when it's finished. I told them,

"He's here and we'll take care of him. We won't let anything happen to him." I found that the fear is not of the seizure, but that something is going to happen to Darren. I recommend that a child not be removed who is having a seizure. If you treat it as a normal occurrence for Darren everything just carries on. I explain that we'll phone the doctor or hospital if something different occurs.

The kids are very used to Darren's seizures now. They'll come to me and say "Darren's in a seizure -- it's about a minute so far. Should I get his blanket because Darren is having a bad day? Should I put him in the bean bag and give him a cuddle?" Once those things happen, all the fear goes out the window.

Fear is the key resistance factor. I was scared out of my mind. Could I hurt them? Could I teach them?

Marsha: What arguments would you use that Darren and Stephanie are better with you than with a segregated school or class?

Claudia: My argument would be that children learn best from other children and children with special needs learn far more from typical children who make regular demands on them.

Marsha: What feedback did you get from parents?

Claudia: The parents have not batted an eyelash. These kids are part of the class. In the class picture Stephanie is sitting criss-crossed on the floor with the rest of the kids. Darren is in his walker. Not a peep from other parents. The kids tell their parents about Darren and Stephanie. All the parents know there is a program in place for their kids so what's the issue? Some get enrichment, some remedial. Darren and Stephanie have their thing -- this is just part of the ball game. Our expectations must move with the child.

Marsha: Any final comments?

Claudia: Darren and Stephanie are part of my life and part of our school. We're lucky to have them -- they're lucky to have us! It's great!

The world changes because people make it change

Marsha Forest

In September, 1986, Rosemary Deeley, a 17-year veteran teacher was asked to "integrate" four teenagers into St. Mary's High School (population 800) in Hamilton, Ont. St. Mary's, located next door to the prestigious McMaster Medical Centre almost on the McMaster University campus, had the reputation of being a "preppy" school.

At first, the school principal had serious reservations, the staff was neutral. Rosemary was assigned to a small room and given a "special" bathroom for her students and an education assistant.

All four of Rosemary's students had a list of labels that would fill pages. None spoke verbally. None went to the bathroom on his/her own. One was in a wheelchair and one was described as "prone to violence." Rosemary took on the challenge and instead of creating a "TR" room or a "Life Skills" centre, she began to create a "hang-out" for all students. Mercifully, the room was located diagonally across from the cafeteria. Everyone who passed room 106 en route to their regular hang-out in the cafeteria, heard Rosemary's audio tapes and saw computers, neat posters, as well as the students. As Rosemary says, "It began gradually with a few kids dropping by the room or saying hello to us in the cafeteria. The high school young men and women would start chatting to their new fellow students in the halls. One person led to another and another and Leslie, one of the four labelled students, literally grabbed and brought people in -- at least two dozen."

The aim for this first year was clearly defined: (1) to build a circle of friends around each labelled student, (2) to start a plan of action involving school, work and after school activities and (3) to fully involve the four students in the life of the school <u>not</u> as a group but as four unique individuals.

In year two, we hope to further refine the curriculum, solidify and increase the circle of friendship and get more after-school involvement.

In May, 1987 I gathered the 40 or so students who had been involved in this community building venture together. Dr. Evelyn Lusthaus, my colleague from McGill University, was also present and her questions, comments and observations form an important part of this article.

All the students present unanimously agreed that the key ingredient in making integration work was the teacher. "What specifically did she do to make it happen?" I asked.

Student 1: "She broke the ice because she was really nice."

Student 2: "We could call her by her first name."

Student 3: "She had good tapes."

Student 4: "We could sit around and talk in her room. We could listen to music or help out."

Student 5: "Her room was like a neutral zone -- I could go there and hide away from my other teachers."

In November, 1986 Rosemary decided to have an assembly inviting any student interested in getting involved with her four students to hear me as a guest speaker and to see a slide presentation on the topic: "No more segregated settings: Why?" Written invitations were given to any students who had originally shown interest in Leslie, Christina, Michael and Kathy. Over 100 students attended.

"What do you remember about that assembly that either turned you on or off?" I asked. What the students remembered most was the emphasis on friendships, the discussion on labelling and being treated like adults with respect, not as "just dumb kids."

The next major event that brought the group together was "the washroom incident." On one of my visits to the school in a gathering of about 35 students I challenged the group to look at the "special" washroom and tell me if they would use it themselves. After heated and quite hilarious conversation, a spontaneous team of ten volunteered to come to school that Sunday to "de-retard" the bathroom. Rosemary was, of course, with the group.

"What did you <u>do</u>?" I asked the group.

Student 1: "It was a 'retard' bathroom and we decided to make it into a bathroom that all of us could use."

Student 2: "We put curtains up to cover the diapers and baby wipes."

Student 3: "We put up teenage posters and wrote graffiti even on the

ceiling. It's really neat!"

Student 4: "Now everyone uses it because it's near the cafeteria and a good place to fix your hair, or whatever."

Dr. Lusthaus wanted to know how the students helped Michael, Kathy, Leslie and Christina get involved in the life of the school and especially in regular classes.

Student 1: "Rosemary went around to our teachers to see who was open to having the students come into their classes."

Student 2: "Now all the students go with us to some of our classes or they go with Rosemary."

Student 3: "We are doing plans of action for each student individually to plan a really exciting week for each person and now we're into planning a neat summer." This is what we came up with for Chris this summer:

- go to drive-in movies
- see concerts
- go to Jackson Square
- go swimming, go on picnics
- have her to our slumber party
- invite her to our barbeque
- go bowling and shopping
- take her with us to Canada's Wonderland, Confederation Park, Bronte Creek and the Cactus Festival.

Dr. Lusthaus was interested in how Michael, Christina, Kathy and Leslie felt about being the topic of the group conversation.

Student 1: "We're not talking about 'them' -- we're talking about all of us and what's happened to all of us this year."

Student 2: "Look at their faces; they love this. They love us."

Student 3: "Look at Kathy. She's so alert. She understands everything, don't you, Kathy?" (Kathy grinned from ear to ear.)

Dr. Lusthaus and I were both interested in what changes each person had gone through because of their involvement. For me, this is the key. Too often we focus on the person with the label and don't see the profound effect on the

life of everyone touched by the experience. The answers that follow reflect what I feel is the true value of having a "complete school."

Student 1: "I try not to use the word 'special' anymore. I call my friends by their names."

Student 2: "I used to sit in the corner and be afraid to talk to people. Now I talk to anyone, I'm not afraid any more -- I talk to anybody."

Student 3: "This is my last year at St. Mary's. I never felt like I did anything with my life. Now I feel I've done something good."

Student 4. "Before, I thought, if there was a handicapped person in the family I couldn't cope with it. Now I know if I get married and have a child with a handicap I would never put my child in a 'home'."

Student 5: "Now I feel people with handicaps **do** have a chance. I'd know what to do if I had a child."

Student 6: "At the beginning, I thought of them as retarded. I was scared, then I became less prejudiced. Now I say there's nothing really special about them, they're just like anyone else, just like us."

Student 7: "I got more open-minded."

Student 8: "I've met lots of new people by being involved. I never would have thought about this before."

Dr. Lusthaus asked the students about their parents' reaction to their involvement.

Student 1: "My parents didn't like all this at first but believe it or not they changed their minds because of me. At first, my mother would say, 'These kids are different -- I don't want you talking to them' like it's contagious or something. So I said, 'Look. So he can't walk. So I can't draw. So what?'"

Student 2: "My parents think it's great. They think this should happen everywhere."

Student 3: "My parents like it. It's been great because now I plan to go to college because of my interest in Leslie and so my folks are really happy."

Dr. Lusthaus asked the students how Michael, Christina, Kathy and Leslie have changed.

Student 1: "When I first came here Michael had bad temper tantrums. They were pretty regular. Now he has maybe one or two a month and they are much milder. I think Michael really knows we're trying to help him, we're his friends, we're behind him all the way."

Student 2: "At first Michael didn't say a word and instead of forcing him to do stuff, we just spent time with him and now he really talks. He says, 'Hello, how are you?' He's really sociable now."

Student 3: "We took Michael to our house for lunch. He loved it."

Student 4: "Christina drools a lot less and smiles a lot more. She likes to laugh now."

Student 5: "Kathy has come alive. She's aware. She laughs now and responds to us more. She is aware when we talk to her and she's just generally more aware of everything around her now."

Student 6: "We think Kathy has actually grown taller!"

Student 7: "Leslie listens more, he understands what's wrong and right. He grabs less, walks better."

At the end of the day I asked Dr. Lusthaus to sum up her observations and feelings: "What I really saw were high school students very comfortable with kids who really have very severe handicapping conditions. I saw real acceptance, a relaxed group enjoying each other without pretense. This is obviously an environment in which the best is brought out in each person. They were so comfortable with each other. There was an amazing amount of genuine hugging and touching. Because the four kids can't talk, I feel they need this non-verbal contact so much. They all seem to like each other -- it's not a patronizing thing at all. They really like being together.

"What particularly struck me was any high school could have a class of four or eight kids and this might never happen. This is so dramatic -- this

kind of acceptance is so rare. Rosemary and her vision and the vision of the school board are obviously the key. She is not only the teacher for the four labelled kids, but she acts as teacher, guidance counsellor, mentor and friend to the rest of the crew.

"She puts no pressure on them, she's happy to see them and makes them feel good about themselves. They obviously love her very much.

"And let's end on the fun part. To these teenagers, this is not **work**, not charity, it's being together in a caring community."

Some would like a formula or a recipe to make this happen -- but this "caring community concept" is **qualitatively different** from what exists now in the traditional special education model.

The teacher **must** be trained both in a values base and in knowledge of communication, learning theory, and curriculum building. A teacher must relax, watch, observe, let things happen. It takes time and most of all, a belief in the dignity and value of all people.

There is no blueprint. There are guiding principles.

What is clear is that the power to control rests with the students and the teacher acts to empower and facilitate **not** control!

The success of St. Mary's shows that we can form a community that crosses age, sex, class and handicapping condition, and can break through preconceived roles, i.e., teacher, student, teen, handicapped....

We have shown in practice that all people have unique gifts to offer and that each belongs.

A new leadership core is emerging. Young people are showing us that a new way is possible. It is stunning and moving for me to see and hear the voices of this new generation -- voices full of energy, vitality and hope -- seeking a new meaning in a world plagued by worry about war, disease, poverty and injustice. These students don't know anything about "behaviour management" or "functional curriculum" but they do know how to reach out and touch with a spontaneity and warmth that is contagious.

THE FRIENDS

With a little help from my friends: The integration facilitator at work

Annmarie Ruttimann and Marsha Forest

For the first time we and Katherine have a sense of belonging. She has a real school to belong to. She even went to a regular dance without her parents. She's not a case any more. Now she's a person who is a student, who has friends and she goes to different classes like a real teenager.

Marthe Woronko

The integration facilitator breaks down the social, developmental and educational barriers stacked against students with very challenging needs. The process isn't a cure-all or an overnight remedy. It's a gradual move to integration in the school and Katherine Woronko's story shows us how integration is possible for all students.

Katherine is almost 15 years old. She lives with her parents, brother and their assorted electronic devices and computers in a cozy home outside Toronto.

All her life Katherine attended segregated services for the "profoundly retarded," and though an accepted family member, she was treated as a lovable child rather than as a developing young adult. Her parents, after all, only believed what they had been told hundreds of times by "experts" -- doctors, teachers and therapists -- Katherine would never walk, communicate or have any degree of independence. She was labelled "the lowest of the low" and "the bottom of the barrel." Her challenging needs were seen as things to stop her entry into "our" world.

Doubts lingered in the minds of family members but they dared to dream aloud with a new group of friends and advocates -- "We want our daughter to go to a regular high school and get ready for a real life in the community," they said.

One year later, after many struggles, hard work, a lot of energy and tears and much laughter, this dream is a reality. Katherine's progress is solid proof. She now makes or understands signs for "drink," "stand," "quiet" and "toilet." She generally stays quiet in her grade 9 classes after moaning continuously in the special education classes. Katherine makes her lunch with peers daily. She's aware of her environment and those around her. And she has friends who care about Katherine as Katherine, and not just because of her special needs.

Painstaking planning and conviction preceded success. Stan and Marthe Woronko, Katherine's parents, had a clear vision of what they wanted for her. They agreed to make financial and emotional sacrifices for a full year. Studying and attending courses to understand the issues took up a lot of free time. They dared to try a plan of action knowing it could possibly fail, then they found St. Robert's High School in Gormley, Ontario where the staff was willing to try the new concept. And at the culmination of all these efforts, Annmarie Ruttiman was hired with grants from The G. Allan Roeher Institute and Frontier College to facilitate the integration process at the school.

Annmarie confesses that last September she was like any optimistic 22-year-old floundering for a future. She had no academic background in the field of mental handicap, and only brief experience at the Alvin Buckwold Centre in Saskatoon last summer. "I had no expectations because of that," said Annmarie, "Katherine was just Kath."

When Annmarie returned to Toronto, she heard about the opening as Katherine's facilitator. Searching for her "niche", Annmarie decided to accept the challenge, the low pay and the chance to do something entirely new.

"When I first met Katherine I was taken a bit aback as anyone would be," said Annmarie, "I thought, 'What can she do?'"

Her initial reactions to Katherine and her behaviour were embarrassment and a bit of fear. "The first time I went out with her," she said, "we went for a walk to the park and Katherine just jumped in the sandbox and fell to her knees and made strange noises. And just like anybody I looked around and said, 'I hope nobody's looking.'"

Even with these initial attitudes, Annmarie, as Katherine's integration facilitator, was hired to build a support circle of teenagers around Katherine by New Year's; and to support Katherine to have friends. Before last September, all programs seemed to ignore the untapped, under-used resource of peers. They were always there but no one had trusted them. The integration facilitator serves as a link between students and the student with very challenging needs.

Although Annmarie built the system around Katherine, she was careful not to get stuck to her. Success is marked by the ability to leave Katherine with her fellow students. Annmarie can simply check in to see if the system if running smoothly but not be part of it.

She believes that almost anyone who is open, flexible, willing to take risks, work hard, accept failure and try again, can be an integration facilitator.

The story of the integration facilitator began in September 1985 when Katherine was packed up in a special bus for a special class at St. Robert's High School in Gormley. For a month she spent her school days with 12 other students in the special class attempting to learn life skills. Annmarie says, "The students are stigmatized by that room." Initially she was frustrated because her beliefs about integration were different from the education and upbringing of many teachers who learned the system of special education.

It only took a month before Katherine was riding to St. Robert's in a regular school bus with other noisy, active and marvelous 14- to 16-year-olds. By January she had a regular homeroom like her bus mates, and a full high school schedule. And now, the teachers at St. Robert's have made an about face in their attitudes on integration.

Annmarie's diary, begun in September 1985, documents her own feelings, Katherine's progress and the changing attitudes of peers and teachers at the school. Annmarie believes that with the help of an integration facilitator, Katherine's story can become the rule rather than the exception for students with very challenging needs.

September 17, 1985

I want to spend the next month:

- getting to know the school
- getting to know the teachers and which ones are open to integration
- but mostly, getting to know Katherine.

I don't know what I'll do, but she can't spend all her time in the special class or we'll both go crazy.

September 18, 1985

Today wasn't any different. I hope things will change. Katherine constantly kicks her shoes off. She was very loud today and I can't help but believe it's because she's bored.

She wanted to wander around a lot and put things in her mouth. She managed to eat a crayon. She doesn't know her way around at all. When she gets off the bus she just stands there and screams. I hope I can get things moving for her so that she will be happier. I wish I knew more and understood her capabilities -- I'm positive she can do a lot more, but nothing is being offered.

She doesn't seem to respond to my voice at all. When I call her she just stands there. She likes to hug a lot and I'm not sure how much I should let her. We should start to do something so these students have a place in the

school before they are bored to death.

Katherine is now eating in the cafeteria but we tend to sit together as a class (the special class).

September 23, 1985

Huntsville Orientation Olympia Camp for grade 9's

Katherine was good during the trip -- she seemed to enjoy it when the others sang.

Katherine's first activity was drama. She got to know some of the kids. The kids seemed to be shy, not knowing how to respond to her. I left her to join some of them, but they didn't seem too interested in involving Katherine in the group.

Next we went to an orientation program for St. Robert's. This included a film on the "joys of high school", then the kids were given time to ask questions. Katherine was noticed and at times laughed at. Katherine and I took a walk at that point in the evening, met some people, etc.

September 26, 1985

The school decided they wanted me to create a "life skills" program for Katherine, so they gave me some money to go out and buy a list of things.

Every day they want me to go through a routine of doing her hair, teeth, etc. It all sounds good -- she should learn these things, but it's going to be so out of context. If her teeth aren't dirty why brush them? I guess for now though, it'll be better than nothing -- which is about all we're doing. So I'll try it, but if Katherine seems bored I'm not going to keep doing it.

September 27, 1985

Today wasn't half bad. It's the first time I've felt like we're making some positive moves. A couple of students from the orientation course had lunch with us!! Others stopped in the hall to say hello. They obviously don't yet know how to communicate with Katherine but I just tell them it's alright because neither do I, really.

Other than that, however, we tried a routine of washing her hands. Katherine can't turn on the water and doesn't seem to differentiate between hot and cold water. She knows how to wipe her face and dry it off. She can brush her own teeth with little assistance. But I already knew all these things about her from the orientation. If only we could do it in context, for example:

after gym -- washing

after lunch -- brushing her teeth
when she gets to school -- brushing her hair (and throughout the day!)

The way we do it now doesn't make sense.

September 30, 1985

Another Monday and nothing seems to be happening fast enough! Maybe I'm expecting too much. I have such a sense of humiliation when Katherine and I walk through the halls and people stop their conversations!! They smile though -- whatever that means.

I'm determined to get at least one class for Katherine. She needs it, deserves it -- has the right to it!!

October 1, 1985

It's the beginning of Katherine's second month at high school. So many changes are noticeable since she has been here. When I first came she cried a lot -- now it's only when we're sitting in the special room. If I have her busy doing things or going somewhere her temperament is tuned to her day! She hardly kicks off her shoes. Her whole posture seems different somehow, to me, at least. Her eyes are open, and she will focus on people.

Of course, a lot still has to happen. I talked with the teacher. She's a phys. ed. teacher. She seems interested in having Katherine join her class. It won't be until the 21st. Right now, they're studying for home ec. so I asked if we could join them in making mini pizzas. She said to come in on Thursday. It seems that the only way to get things moving is by inviting ourselves in, or else we'll wait forever to get invited. Other than that, I haven't met any teachers interested in supporting us -- but I'm positive there are some -- it will just take some doing to seek them out. I don't have a lot of time, and that part scares me a little. Only a couple months to go and I want Katherine to have her companions and classrooms all settled. The faster she's integrated, the better it will be for everyone, I think. Why doesn't everybody see it the way I do? Wouldn't that be great!

October 2, 1985

Today I went to talk with the religion teacher. He seems very receptive to having any of the "special" students in his class. I went to his classroom to talk and ended up speaking to his Grade 11 religion class about what I was doing. The students were full of questions about Katherine and the others in the class and their behaviours and why we had that class. They even asked what integration and segregation meant! It felt good to hear the responses and the questions -- these students are interested and have the right to ask and

receive answers to their questions. As a result, Katherine and I were invited to join their class. We will begin on Friday of this week. Maybe at the end of the month or so I could re-evaluate Katherine's being there: did she learn anything? Have the feelings of the class changed in any way? Mostly I'd like them to get to know Katherine and have the sense I can leave her, and that the teacher and the students will feel comfortable with that.

October 17, 1985

I was walking in the hall with Katherine and she wandered into a class on her own! Now we are invited to stay. I just talk with the teachers, reassure them that I'll be there the whole period and it seems to be no problem.

I've received a **lot** of support and interest by taking her with me, meeting the teachers and students and immersing ourselves in the class. There are no fears built that way and they are given the opportunity to see that there is nothing to be concerned about, and if they just give Katherine the opportunity she can benefit so much from the environment.

October 25, 1985

Katherine and I are getting to know so many students now. They stop us in the hall, and aren't hesitant about spending time with her. If I want to make a phone call or go to the washroom, I know I can leave her!

We had three classes today. Gym was great again. I think that will be my favourite! She was tossing the ball into a hoop that one of the students held. The teacher got one student to practice throwing and catching with Katherine and me.

In home ec. they made macaroni and cheese. Lori helped Katherine do a lot. I pretty much sat back and watched. Lori told Lorna (a girl from orientation who laughed at Katherine a lot) to help her make the juice. A great experience for Lorna and she was good with her, too. It showed me that it really works -- once you have the introduction and a supportive environment, anyone can learn to be comfortable. Religion wasn't so great. She seemed angry with me that I wanted her to stay. She cried out then settled down and even started to laugh. The class seems to enjoy her coming. Somebody said as we entered the room, "Oh, she's coming in today!" They didn't understand why she was upset, and I really couldn't give them a positive answer. She wanted to get up and walk around, it seemed, and I wouldn't let her. I wish she could tell me but she can't, so I have to understand her as best I can. That must have been it, however, because when the buzzer went and we left, she was very happy. It was time to go home.

November 1, 1985

Today was really rushed. Katherine and Mary Beth went horseback riding so Katherine was exhausted. She had gym this morning. She made and ate her lunch and then went riding. Mary Beth said she loved it and is trotting now.

Katherine is interesting. I find that she will do something only if she wants to -- otherwise she needs a great deal of guidance. For example, when she sits and kicks off her shoes. If I ask her to put them on again she will act as if she can't bend over to pick them up and yet I've seen her pick something up with great ease when she wanted it. I laugh because it's all a sign that she does have a personality and needs to be treated the same as any other stubborn person would be treated.

November 5, 1985

Today Katherine had a spare in gym. I found myself lost for ideas, and as a result completing very little except for a bit of socializing. We met a new girl who just came from Jamaica. She's in Katherine's religion class. We had a great conversation about being a minority and the feeling of humiliation when you see a group of people laughing or the conversation stops when you get within hearing distance. This is the trouble with integration of any kind! She told me how before she came to this school she was afraid of people with special needs, but her interaction with Katherine has freed her of it. I told her that by her acceptance of Katherine she has freed Katherine as well. Katherine accepted her the minute we spoke -- it's too bad we all can't be as free!!

Katherine has been invited to join a computers class, so we will start tomorrow in third period.

Katherine's schedule is quickly rounding out.

November 8, 1985

Art class -- I got so tired of waiting to be invited, so I went up to the art teacher, introduced Katherine to him and we started during his fifth period art class today. I don't know anyone in the class so we were pretty isolated. Katherine wasn't at all interested or sure of where she was. Overall I think it was a bit of both!

The teacher seemed very receptive when I approached him after class. We started talking about how I wanted Katherine to use all the same materials as the rest of the class although I know she won't produce the same work. His comment was very kind and that if I felt I needed anything for Katherine that I was to let him know. The more times I get positive feedback like that, the more I feel like I can keep going. I'm not always sure what to do, but I find

instincts have gotten the best results!

November 18, 1985

Katherine arrived at class with Josie. Josie was an excellent choice -- she's very reliable and keenly interested in Katherine as a friend. She always stops us in the hall to ask how we are.

Katherine took her first temper tantrum on me. She seemed upset because I wouldn't let her have everyone's things to drink or eat. I really want Katherine to be able to communicate better. It just frustrates us both to not be able to understand.

November 19, 1985

I'm finding today very difficult. Either it's me or just Katherine who isn't having a good day. I find that when I see her unhappy it frustrates me.

Two things did happen today that were exciting. In art, Katherine picked up a marker and focussed on the paper to draw. It lasted about 60 seconds and she did it twice. In typing, Katherine showed that she can press down on the keys almost hard enough to produce letters. She seems to enjoy both classes and has calmed down considerably.

I spoke with the drama teacher. She's invited Katherine and I to her drama class for next week. We'll see if it comes through.

November 26, 1985

I had a talk with the vice-principal today. One of the teachers came to him during an assembly of a speaker and said that they felt Katherine was distracting the other students. Instead of coming to me, they felt embarrassed and went to him. I went right to him to find out what was happening. He and I talked for a good ten minutes. We decided that Katherine would attend all assemblies except for speakers, with his "support 100 percent," quote, unquote! So, now I have his word directly. We should understand one another.

November 27, 1985

Today went quickly. We went horseback riding. I noticed mostly today that Katherine has learned our lunch making routine. She walks in the home ec. class, goes to the fridge, grabs the bag and walks over to the counter and the opposite when we're finished. It's really exciting to watch her do a big portion of it independently!

December 4, 1985

Today was a very typical day. We went through our routine and she seesm to

be picking up more each day.

She eats regularly with Sue and Josie. They are being great companions for Katherine. They do a lot for her and Katherine needs to remind them that she needs to do things for herself or else she'll always be too dependent on others.

Her gym class is going really well. She seems to be picking up on the dances. She'll follow the others and she moves her hands along with mine.

The rest of the day was really uneventful. We spent some time in the library with Theresa. She's really friendly and seems to always be following us. I don't remember how I met her but I'm sure it was just being exposed to the rest of school and not by staying in that room!!

January 9, 1986

Today Katherine signed "drink please" in the library, so we went to get a drink.

Michelle says that she shows a definite preference to peanut butter when she makes her lunch. She always goes for it but when Michelle showed her the ham she knocked it out of the way and picked up the peanut butter!

She also chose to brush her own hair today and not let Michelle do it. She brushed all around her head.

I demonstrated to Carla and Josie today how Katherine is able to dress and undress herself for gym. They were surprised to see how much she could do -- put her pants on, take off her shirt, skirt and nylons, shoes etc.

April 8, 1986

Josie is really excellent. Katherine listens to her, seems to enjoy being with her. In religion Katherine doesn't have much to do except sit and learn to be quiet while someone is speaking. She seems to be a lot quieter now than before.

Katherine went to her first drama class today. This was the class replacing computers. It was fabulous. I've never seen Katherine take to a new environment as she did today. It was just beautiful. She was quiet, interactive, inquisitive, friendly and she quickly fit in with a group of girls. The students were great. I think I'm going to enjoy this. The teacher seemed excitied about having Katherine and even commented on how she sees changes in her.

Katherine and Cindy went to a drama presentation and she sat quietly for an entire 50 minutes. She communicated to Cindy that she needed to go to the washroom by tapping herself and lifting her skirt just a bit until Cindy realized what it was she wanted.

April 15, 1986

Michelle said that Katherine used the sign for washroom yesterday. She's going to try again today to see if she repeats herself. I love her sooo much, and more than that I believe in her. She can and will learn. Same with Kim and Alexia. It's so ridiculous that they've been treated so different.

April 26, 27, 1986

This weekend 15 students came up to Queensville. We spent an incredible weekend brainstorming and being creative. I found the students exciting to work with. They really want to make things happen. It was just a great time. The whole weekend I didn't once think about what %2I%1 had to do with Katherine and Alexia -- they did everything. They made sure they ate, slept, washed and **suntanned.** It was a real hoot. It was fun, constructive and when everyone had gone, I sat back and cried because it was so overwhelmingly fantastic.

May 6, 1986

The enthusiasm never stops amazing me. All day the students stop to talk, laugh and share stories of the day. I love to watch and enjoy the friendships that have grown over the year. The time and attention that some of the students demand, you'd think some of them would lose focus on Katherine. But then I stop and think about it. They are a part of things because it's meeting their own needs as well. It's a lot of fun but sometimes it's frustrating as heck.

May 27, 1986

Katherine now has total support at school and at home. The only thing she's missing from the whole picture is a quality program in her classes. All of this has been done with minimal support from the special education teachers but they did give me the freedom to do what I needed to do. The result, of course, has been that they want me to do the integration for all the students. But I can't and won't do it half-baked. We need to be prepared, organized and clear that we want the same things. We need a team effort, commitment and a little more work.

The students' support, enthusiasm, commitment and energy have made everything possible. They've touched the hearts of parents, teachers, Katherine and myself. What a world of change they've made without realizing it. They were given the opportunity and support and they flew with it.

Katherine's a beautiful, frustrated, uninhibited young woman with a self-awareness of what she likes, and who she likes. I love her. The important thing is that it doesn't stop there. She needs so much more -- things from people who haven't yet given because they didn't see it as possible. Now they must **give** because Katherine has 20 people who are going to demand it for her.

I've heard people say it's a miracle -- maybe so, but it's one that is possible for everyone. The recipe is a little aggressiveness, a lot of work, a belief, love and risk. That seems to be the recipe for a lot of things.

We have brought together people, given them opportunities, encouraged them to say what they believe and led them through the experience. The creativity and caring is beyond anything anyone else could have done.... All because we gave them a chance, sensed what was needed, treated them justly. It wasn't always euphoric, there were a lot of confusing and painful times. I only wish Katherine could tell us herself about what she's experienced over the year. She knows better than anyone else the injustice she has suffered over those 14 years and how it is for her now.

On April 24, eight months after Katherine began her new life at St. Robert's High School, there was a meeting with all of Katherine's teachers. Stan and Marthe Woronko were there to express their thanks to the team. Annmarie chaired the meeting.

Katherine's parents are overwhelmed with the success of the integration facilitator concept. Mrs. Woronko says, "We've proved so much by working co-operatively. But the real magic is watching Katherine and her circle of friends -- real friends, people who genuinely like being with her, not out of pity or charity, but because she is a teenager more like them than unlike them."

The teachers responded positively. One said, "We were afraid at first because we'd never been exposed to kids like Katherine. We thought we needed special training to deal with her. She has changed dramatically. I saw her at the school dance last week and she looked fantastic."

Annmarie says Katherine has "come alive" over the year. "She has become more a part of our work and we can understand her world more now too."

She hopes other students with challenging needs will be given the same opportunity. Funding is anticipated from the board of education for integration facilitators in the fall.

Integration doesn't stop at school. Katherine celebrates her birthday this month -- and for the first time, she'll have a **real** birthday party with a circle of people who see her as they see each other -- as true friends.

Annmarie Ruttiman has worked with Katherine Woronko and the students at St. Robert's High School over the past school year as an integration facilitator.

Marsha Forest is a visiting scholar at The G. Allan Roeher Institute and helped to launch the integration facilitator program.

We would like to thank the principal, Mr. David Lennon, and the staff of St. Robert's High School for their openness and their efforts devoted to launching and supporting the integration facilitator program.

A two-way street:
Integration through peer support

Aleda O'Connor

When students with high needs first came to St. Jerome's High School in Kitchener, they spent the whole day in the special learning resource centre, enduring what Rev. Pat Mackan calls the back-of-the-bus syndrome. Segregated from the rest of the school, the special education students, whose families were among the first in Kitchener to send their teenagers to a regular high school, might have well been invisible. Even the staff who taught them felt isolated and lonely. It wasn't that they weren't welcome, just that no one knew them. There wasn't really an opportunity.

It's not like that anymore, and never will be again. The high needs students are integrated into regular classrooms, and everyone else is integrated into the learning resource centre.

When Steven, a severely handicapped 17-year-old gets up from his afternoon rest, a group of gifted students arrives for an enrichment class. During the day there is an ebb and flow of students through the three large carpeted rooms on the main floor, some coming for extra help, others leaving from enrichment, some arriving to use the computer or to meet friends and bask in the atmosphere of the resource centre which feels more like a community centre.

Here, integration has been taken one step further. The student body has enrolled itself in the support, integration and progress of its peers with high needs. Mainstreaming has not only become a fact, but it has become a highly desirable condition of education for everyone involved: students, teachers, parents and community.

Community is really what mainstreaming is all about. Because of his work in developing Christian community, Fr. Mackan was invited to help facilitate the St. Jerome's program. Having completed a doctoral degree on ministry with the disabled, Mackan had spent some time in Bermuda working on parish development. There, he had begun by asking who **wasn't** part of the parish community, and soon found that families of the disabled were a significant group outside the normal parish community and felt there was no place for themselves.

At a meeting of these families, Fr. Mackan wondered what they imagined would happen in an ideal community. With no restrictions, they were asked to

The Reporter, February 1987.

describe their "impossible dreams." Perhaps it should have been obvious, but their answers have probably been repeated by every parent who has ever considered what the future holds for their child. "We want our children to have friends. We want them to have a nice place to live. We want to know they will be cared for after we are dead. We want our child to have a job and an income."

When presented with these fears and concerns, members of Fr. Mackan's parish rallied around the isolated families, and spontaneously began to offer friendship and support. "It was an extraordinary thing to witness. They formed circles of support around those families, and there was a ripple effect. As more people became involved, they in turn drew in still more."

When Fr. Machan was subsequently invited to return to Canada and work with the staff and students at St. Jerome's, the results were repeated. The conditions to recreate the Bermuda experience seemed ideal. Thirteen disabled students were already in the school. George Flynn, the Director of Education for the Waterloo County Roman Catholic Separate School Board was the former Superintendent of Special Services for Metropolitan Separate School Board and the principal of St. Jerome's, the late Rev. Mike Cundari considered human relations and Christian community a priority.

Fr. Mackan and everyone else were to learn that integration was a state of mind. "The idea of building a Christian community in a school excited me. Most of us struggle to be Catholics, and we feel safe with the traditional symbols of the Church: the habits, collars and chapels. But with funding, most of the high schools are being started by lay people and they need more than a chaplain or a prayer room. I kept asking myself what makes a school Catholic?" Fr. Mackan answered the question himself: Community and action.

Mike Schmitt is the head of the learning resource centre at St. Jerome's. He says that besides lots of support, one of the keys to successful integration is time. Led by Fr. Mackan, the students and staff were sensitized to the needs of the high needs students and their families over the year. In the spring, Mary Wawryk, the school's community facilitator spoke to all grade 11 students. "The idea was to get peer support for these students." She asked for volunteers to help before school, during the day, at lunch and after school. Thirty students volunteered to begin in September, 1986.

What no one expected was the genuine enthusiasm and commitment with which the 1200 St. Jerome's boys accepted their new role. As soon as school started Wawryk found students in the learning resource centre asking to join the volunteers. From being an isolated group within the school, the students with a handicap had become a focus, a source of pride and school spirit.

Although some volunteers were assigned to meet wheel-trans buses at the door in the morning, it has now become an honour to assist, and there is never a shortage of willing hands. Students have completely taken over the responsibility of assisting handicapped friends get to class, and keep a casual eye on their classmates to make sure they keep on track. No longer must staff make arrangements to get the students with a handicap out to football games. A completely natural community of peers has developed around the individual students. "Mrs. Wawryk trusts us with these guys," says Grade 13 student Jody Schnarr. "She gives us a lot of responsibility and that keeps us motivated. I just love it."

Dave Crovetto, a Grade 11 student says that the volunteers get a lot of help from the learning resource team. "They arrange meetings and we had a Christmas party for the peer support teams. We shared our ideas and talked about any problems that we might be having. One guy runs off sometimes and then we all have to find him."

"By helping this way, the students make the teachers' jobs much easier," says Schmitt. In fact, the rest of the teachers are free to continue their academic role with very little change in routine.

Brother Cliff Bringleson is a good example. Having taught typing for some 30 years, he was understandably uneasy when he learned that some of the students with the highest needs would be joining his typing class. Robert Yendruck is 21, and functions at an academic level of about Grade 1. He goes to typing class primarily to learn the alphabet, and his assignment has been to find and type his name, ROB. "I was worried at first that I would spend all my time looking after him, and helping him," admits Br. Bringleson. "But he doesn't take any more class time than anyone else since he works at his own evel. Occasionally he calls out 'finished!' and if he hasn't, one of the other just says, 'No you're not Rob, come on.' They are as casual about him as anyone else in the class. He doesn't disturb us at all."

Steve Craven has a wheelchair. His ability to speak is very limited. The 17-year-old youth is brought to class by Mary Mayer, one of the learning resource team because classroom activity is stimulating and helps reinforce appropriate behaviour. His chair is placed beside Br. Bringleson at the front of the room, and during one of his first classes Br. Bringleson was startled to find Steve's hand resting on the side of his face and throat. At the end of the class Mayer explained that Steve had been feeling the vibrations of his teacher's voice, a gesture of admiration and affection. For Bringleson, exposure to people with a disability was unexpectedly rewarding. "I had no previous experience, and I was told that I would come to love these students.

Even so, I wasn't sure what my feelings would be at first, but I was very surprised by it all. You can't help loving them. They have given us a lot."

Teachers often express doubts about the value of integration, wondering whether the needs of average students would be overlooked because the emphasis and cash was directed towards special education. Fr. Mackan is convinced that the strengthened community and the enhanced socialization of all the students is nothing but a benefit. "Students like to be able to do things for each other. They are genuinely generous and the presence of the disabled is a gift, an opportunity to share."

He says the philosophy behind integration at St. Jerome's is based on welcoming everyone into a Christian community. "That's what we do with regular kids. And it is the students themselves who make it happen. All the students. The learning resource team is there to provide the curriculum adjustments and help the teachers in a pedagogical sense. What has been interesting about what has happened has been the alliances that have developed between the staff and students. They are working together to help integrate these students into the Catholic school community."

There are approximately 85 students of the 1200 at the school who are identified as exceptional, ranging from bright, to learning disabled, through behaviour problems to mental and physical disabilities, says Schmitt. About half the identified students attend all classes in a regular setting, with some curriculum modifications designed by the learning support team. The other 40 also come in to the resource centre to work under the supervision of one of the seven staff members in the learning resource centre on an individual program for one period each day. Many of these have learning disabilities and are receiving support in language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking as well as study skills.

The students with high needs are those who are noticeably behind their peers, for the most part at Grade 1 or 2 level academically. Most in this group are scheduled into a three-pronged school program. Each day they spend some time in a regular class in such subjects as physical education, religion, math, shop, art or music. They also have programs of activities in the learning resource centre, which are carried out beside everyone else who comes to the centre for help and enrichment. In addition, there is a community work-experience component to their day, along the co-op education model, and students are currently clerking in a bicycle store, working in a coffee shop, assisting in a grocery store or in a library.

"It is fair to say we may have been neglecting students that we know will

go directly into the work place from school. These boys have learned skills directly in the work place that couldn't really be taught in an artificial situation. One student who couldn't manage simple mathematics can make change up to $10 in the shop where he has a part time job," says Schmitt. "They are real jobs, and our students are making a real contribution."

Ted O'Donohue was born with Down Syndrome. Last week, the 16-year-old student got 95 per cent on a grade 9 history test on World War II. As a result of the peer support system and the level of commitment between students that it has generated, he is genuinely a part of school events. For his parents, Ted's integration at St. Jerome's is particularly gratifying. "He's really learning, and getting an academic challenge for the first time in his life," says Mrs. O'Donohue. At last he is being treated like a young man. "He identifies with the boys at St. Jerome's and his behaviour is much more appropriate for his age." Like many people with Down Syndrome, Ted was an extremely affectionate child and people were inclined to play with him and baby him. "I think he was trained to be retarded," observes his mother, recalling the years he spent in sheltered classrooms and being given meaningless tasks. The companionship of his adolescent peers who take him to football games, out to movies, dances and regularly visit him after school or talk on the telephone, has overcome that tendency.

It is reassuring for the O'Donohues to see that the St. Jerome's experience has created a community for Ted. "His friends are always speaking to him and talking to him when we're out together," says Mrs. O'Donohue. "I can see that he is well known and cared for by boys he met at school from all over Kitchener who will always look out for him."

Robert Yendruck has been at St. Jerome's for two years. His mother admits they were afraid that the students would make fun of their 21-year-old son. Being the parent of an adult with a handicap can be very lonely, she says. It isn't easy to do things that he enjoys or to find help, so it is reassuring to realize that the students at the school want to spend time with him. "You behave like the people you are with," says Mrs. Yendruck, "and if he spends all his time with people with handicaps in a shelter, he won't learn how to behave."

Conversely, unless everyone is exposed to people with handicaps, no one else will learn how to behave or understand either. It's a two-way street.

Jenny

Emily Nicholls, Student, Lourdes High School

Everybody in our school knew Jenny, her locker was right near mine. I spoke to her on occasion, but never really got to know her. None of us did, until the fall of 1986.

A teacher at our school, Susie Wilson decided that Jenny needed some friends. She was forming a support circle of friends for those who felt they needed peer support. From that group she asked about nine of us if we would form a special support circle around Jenny. We started by making lists and schedules for phone calls and social activities; we mapped out our lives for the next two months. We soon realized that it was just not possible for any of us to develop any sort of real friendships from something that was so planned. We were just too organized! We began calling ourselves the JAS group, (Jenny After School) and we more or less just played things by ear.

Jenny told us in October that some of her big goals were to go to a school dance; have a sleepover; just hang out at the mall; and to gab on the phone with friends. Well, we did all that and more, much more....

The funny part is that none of us really expected to come to care for Jenny as much as we do. When we first started out, sure we all liked her, but it goes much further than that now. Jenny is a good friend. She's always cheering me up when she knows I'm down, and she can always be counted on to come over or to do something on a rainy Saturday afternoon.

The JAS group has become so much more than a club at school -- it has become a group of special friends.

THE PARENTS

Rationale for Erica's integration

Carla Baudot

The purpose of schooling for anyone is a preparation for adulthood in the community, training of people to be able to contribute to society to the best of their activities, in a valued, happy way that builds and maintains self-esteem. Segregating anyone in a mandatory way is degrading and undermines the esteem that others may otherwise have for the segregated person.

Realistically, Erica should be brought up in such a way that she is prepared to live as an adult in her community. Even segregated workshops are gradually being closed in order to allow people with handicaps to work at jobs in the community among other citizens. And so, whatever kind of life she leads as an adult will take place in the community among people who, hopefully, will respect, accept, and value her for herself, handicaps aside.

The reality is that if Erica is to be accepted as a full and valued member of society, then she must be seen by the other children, the adults of tomorrow with whom she is being brought up, as a full and valued member of the community. This is what seems to be happening in her school: the children not only see Erica in their classroom, they see the same people who are concerned about how they work, also being concerned about how Erica works.

In Erica's case, having spent several years prior to coming to the Metropolitan Separate School Board in classrooms with children "like herself" (or those needing much one-to-one attention, no matter how different she is from others), the reality is that she did not:

- o get the attention needed: She spent a good part of each day placed in one area after another, left to her own devices (which meant non-functional activity with full opportunity to pick up inappropriate self-stimulatory behaviour), because the other children needed similar primary care. There is only so much time one can give each child with multiple needs in any one activity beyond feeding and toiletting when there are several children among whom to divide activity periods.
- o have appropriate models: The other children did not walk or exhibit appropriate behaviours.
- o have opportunity for hearing language and learning to communicate: None of the children knew how to talk or interact; with no interactions among children, children cannot learn to communicate. As well, Erica had none

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Thus Erica, came to the Metropolitan Separate School Board multiply handicapped

- o by her disabilities
- o by the system
- o by her age, having lost the best (early) years for learning.

In spite of these handicaps, over the first year with MSSB, and increasingly since, we have all seen Erica progress in her alertness, and capabilities. Let us not penalize her by adding to her handicaps; she needs more, not less, stimulation. If the particular program is not doing all that it should, it is the program that needs modification, not Erica's placement. Can all of her needs be met in a single classroom setting? Erica has so many and such high needs, that this would be impossible, and some may even have to be missed in any one school. However, the most important fact to keep in mind is that teaching her any particular skill without true acceptance of her along with the acquisition of that skill, i.e., acceptance by her community, simply nullifies the point of learning that skill. If the community does not know how to relate to her, it will not accept her. An isolated and lonely person is an unfulfilled person, no matter how skilled.

How do we achieve real acceptance, as opposed to mere tolerance? Erica is not the only one to learn. We must think of the other children too. How shall we teach them to value all people as human beings, with all of their differences? To condone congregation of children under the heading handicap is to ignore their individuality, their differences, and their worth. They cannot develop self-esteem in this way, nor can the other children develop respect for them.

If there is a special education room, and a special education teacher in the school, we see nothing wrong with having a resource area, for all special activities and pertaining to all children in the school. Children should be able to move in and out for special programs; the computers can be there for all; bright children can come in for independent and additional intellectual stimulation just as children with learning disabilities can come in for special instruction. All children could go in for a few minutes of stretching on a mat, just as could Erica. I have seen resource rooms work in Kitchener, Ont. This avoids segregation. The room is accessible to all children, and is not the "retarded", "M.H.", or "handicapped" room.

All children have the right to share educational experiences with others their own age. All children have the right to become just one of the kids. Successful integration of a child with exceptional needs benefits not only the child, but also his or her friends and peers, the school system and society as

a whole (Integration Action Group). Successful integration does not mean spending all day in the same classroom as certain other children (ignoring individual needs does not show respect for the person -- treating people as equals means to accommodate their differences [Judge Abella]). But the child should be seen as belonging as do the other children, and we should show that we care enough about her to create a program that meets her needs. Should she misbehave, it is right for the other children to know that that is not acceptable, as for any other child. Erica has to learn when it is appropriate to make noise and when to be quiet, when to work alone quietly and when to work in a group.

The challenge is to devise a program in an integrated setting. But then, teaching has always been a challenge and a learning experience, for the teachers, as much as for the students.

The above was written prior to the May 19 meeting at G.E. Cartier. I was impressed by what I heard. I know that everyone is striving for the good of all children. The acceptance of the philosophy of integration, and of its fulfillment is still in a vulnerable position because of our current need to learn to understand it. As a parent, I need to be reminded from time to time that Erica's integration is not at risk. I felt real support at the meeting in general and appreciated especially the two people who spoke up to reassure me.

You can see from what I had written above that I had already recognized the value of using another room as a resource area for Erica (and for others). Having a special education teacher more actively involved is also appropriate. Anything that can lighten new loads for the teacher or anyone else is necessary.

I had not been aware that Lillian was a resource for other children with special needs from other classes in a way that other teachers are not. She has been given a lot of extra responsibility, obviously due to her capabilities. I, (along with the parent who had been with me,) perhaps more than anyone else at that meeting, am aware of the danger of burn-out, no matter how capable a person is. Parents of children with special needs are more constantly closer to this than anyone else.

I like Lillian's idea of team teaching (to me, this is what community is all about in any case, special needs or not). And I thank Michael for his support and description of how the structuring could, in his view, come about.

I would like to explain why I feel so strongly about the need for effective communication between home and school regarding Erica's programming. I had the comment that other children's parents are not so inolved. The idea was that

if we want to normalize Erica's life, then, as with other children in the grade 5-6 age range who tend to communicate less with their parents about what is going on at school, even if Erica were able to talk, she still probably wouldn't keep us informed, and this would be normal.

The first point to make is that if there are parents who are not involved in their children's education, then let's aim higher when it comes to improving involvement. As far as Erica is concerned, she has the kind of parents who remain involved in both their children's education. Her older sister may or may not be an exception to the rule. Nevertheless, she does still come home and tells us about her work and events that take place at school, and we encourage this.

It would have been far easier to ask Erica how her day went than to have to rely on a notebook. And we would not have been satisfied without feedback, either from Erica herself of from indications of what the curriculum consisted; we would have consulted with the teacher, and supervised more at home pending any problems. When I was teaching a number of years ago, I appreciated parents who took an interest in their child's progress and needs.

Normalizing a child's life does not mean that we expect to make the child normal, nor that we should treat the child exactly as we treat the others. Rather, it means to make the child's life as close to the norm as possible (or to what we would like the norm to be), to do what is necessary to give the child opportunities equal to the other children. To maximize Erica's opportunities for learning, her parents have to be involved, more than for other children.

With society's knowledge of child development, we can generalize far more in order to meet other children's needs than we can with Erica and other children who have special needs. If we are familiar with the typical curriculum for the various grades, and the typical child comes home with certain marks and comments on a report card, we have a fair idea of what the child has learned and the material used for teaching him or her the particular curriculum.

Even when teacher training eventually includes philosophical foundations in integration and practice in integrated, or in creating integrated settings, we will still have to deal with individual needs in each situation. The reasons for children's special needs are not uniform, nor do the needs themselves necessarily resemble each other. Hopefully we will get to the point where parents don't have to be so involved, but they will always have a certain amount of understanding about their own child that will be helpful to the teachers. In addition, the school has access to trained educators and people

with specialized expertise (occupational therapists, language consultants, etc.) whose ideas should be shared with parents for possible use at home, for the sake of continuity and more efficient learning.

Thoughts on Jenny and MAPS

Phyl Sharratt

What it means to be a real advocate

We have only begun to sense the tragic wounds some people with mental handicaps may feel when it dawns on them that the only people relating with them -- outside of relatives -- are ***paid*** *to do so. If you or I came to such a said realization about ourselves, it could rip at our souls to even talk about it. Changes are some of us would cover it up with one noisy, awkward bluff after another. And changes are, some professionals seeing us act this way, would say we had "maladaptive behaviour."*

Think about what it would feel like to have ***even one*** *person come to us and without pay, develop a reliable, long-term relationship with us because he or she wanted to... to literally accept us as we are. Then, think of the unspeakable feelings we might possess if -- when others were "talking down" to us and "putting us in our place" -- that kind person could be counted on to defend us and stick up for us as well! Most of us do have persons like that in our lives. But will the day ever come when citizens with mental handicaps will have them too?*

"Listen Please"
Mental Retardation
April 1979, Vol. 29, No. 2

Jenny is now almost 15 years old and has been fully integrated in the separate school system since she was five and went to Kindergarten. Having this advantage, Jenny learned well and accepted the challenge presented by her peers as she moved from year to year with them. She is a very gregarious person and never lacked for friends in our neighbourhood. For many years she was just a kid on the block going to and from school, dallying after school to play with friends, playing at friends' houses and having friends playing at her house especially in the summer.

So what happened in Jenny's life to change all that?

Growing up I suppose. Suddenly the kids were becoming young men and women -- remember those awful days when you couldn't go out because of a zit on your face? -- the mood swings without understanding why? -- the embarrassment of feeling 'different'? And worse, never to be seen with anyone who was 'different'? Yes, all of those things as well as going to high school on the bus. The little local school community was changed to a melting pot of youth.

The first year at junior high found Jenny searching for her old contacts in the neighbourhood but they were not there, only the younger ones. The second year was worse.... She didn't want to play with the little kids. She had no one, no one that is except for Amy. Amy was a friend of two years' standing and was a very good friend but she no longer lived close by so their times together were often weeks apart. In the late summer we waved goodbye as Amy returned to live in Ohio. After Amy the world was empty.

Jenny's happy, outgoing self became solitary and moody, spending hours in her bedroom, sometimes crying and sometimes just lying. She went places with us, her parents, but these excursions were more tolerated than enjoyed and at times she would take off to do her own thing much to our frustration and annoyance. She was wanting to be like other teenagers.

There was still more to come: After the beginning of the new semester at school we saw an escalation of obnoxious behaviour, rudeness to teachers, bad language, aggressive behaviours and non-compliances... problems, problems, problems.

We knew what Jenny was trying to tell us. We knew she needed friends. It was heartbreaking to see her like this and after reading the quotation at the beginning of this article, it all seemed so clear, but how could we convince others? How could we, her family, find such a person to be her friend? Then, like an answer to a prayer, I was asked, "Ever heard of the Integration Action Group?" "Is that the group of parents fighting to get their children into schools?" I asked; "if so, then I'm not really needing that group." "Why not find out more? why not come to our workshop -- we're having one soon."

So I went. It was GREAT!!! Katherine's story, the dynamics of working together, the enthusiasm and... the next day

"We are doing MAPS tomorrow. It would be great if you would bring Jenny but only if you're comfortable with the idea."

I didn't know what MAPS was all about and I worried for Jenny, she was very unpredictable and it could turn out to be a disaster and then she would not be at all happy with herself afterwards. I decided to let Jenny make the decision, and she said "Yes," She quite liked the idea of coming to a grown ups meeting to talk about herself. The next morning she dressed up in her school uniform and wanted to look her best. I cancelled out my previous commitment and we set off for Toronto. She wanted to talk all the way from Guelph, over and over about what she was going to say at this meeting.

We did MAPS. It was FANTASTIC!! -- SHE was FANTASTIC!!!!! -- THEY were FANTASTIC!!! Can you imagine doing all of this with her little group from school, in front of an audience and not even being aware that others were present? The action was immediate and before we left that day it had been arranged that Jenny would go to the school dance at the end of the week. The phone started to ring for Jenny, shopping trips were arranged, munching at Mother's Pizza parlour, car rides when Emily passed her driving test, lunchtime meetings, pot-luck supper, visits to her house, and visits as well as sleep-overs at their houses, lots of social integration and now it's the norm.

The behaviours? Jenny is a much happier person with a sense of belonging and being needed. She has become once again a contributing member of her school community and is managing well... and... like all of us, she has her off days but these are few and far between.

The beauty of this process for us, her parents, is that for the first time we have not had to do it all ourselves. Jenny's support circle has called itself the JAS group (Jenny After School) and they are a super bunch of young people. They keep us informed, they do what they say they are going to do and more. They're always meeting and planning and Jenny is included. They've helped her with difficulties and coached from the side lines with her coping skills. It's wonderful. It's great when the house resounds with the sounds of Jenny's friends and when she goes out too.

Right now I feel that it is time to review, glance back to where we were, acknowledge the progress that has been made and perhaps add to the goals which were first set. I want these young people to glow in their success, to know how great they are (including Jenny), and to recognize their achievements. I think that for many in this group mental handicap has taken on a new meaning - a real meaning of people first -- a new understanding that our handicaps are only a small part of us.

There is a tremendous need for this experience to teach the lives of other young people in our local area. It needs to move out into the community but I am unclear about how and where to begin. What do we need to do to ensure that all young people like Jenny can receive the gift of friendship and support to enjoy the riches of social integration? I wish that all schools would be as co-operative and supportive as the one with which we are involved. Perhaps one day they will realize the benefits and bonuses brought about by social integration and will want to see Integration Action Groups operating.

THE CIRCLE

The circle:
Making a dream come true

Annmarie Ruttimann Hoskins

Katherine is a 15-year-old girl. She lives at home with her parents and a younger brother named Stefan. She recently spent her summer months at a program called the "Summer Get-Together" as a Counsellor-In-Training (CIT). In the fall she will be returning to her local high school as a grade 10 student.

I met Katherine in August of 1985. We were to become very good friends and present many new challenges to an age-old system. Katherine's challenge was to prove her potential to a world that had previously shut her out. Katherine is a young woman who embraces opportunities and ignores limitations. Her struggle to get into high school has been a long and sometimes very wounding process.

Katherine's story is one that needs to be told. It is one of excitement, hard work on the part of many people and most important, liberation.

The present issue facing our education system today is the integration of people who have been labelled by our society. There are many people who are struggling to get rid of labels and change values in order to share in the same opportunities. Our education system needs to deal with that issue. We need to begin where the values are formed and produce the strategies to implement change.

Many of the people involved are part of a national organization called the Integration Action Group. This group is used as a support to parents and their children. Most people involved are either working in the field or associated with someone who has special needs. These parents and individuals want to make the education system accountable when they talk about "quality education" for their children. All people involved are desirous of humanization.

I would like to go back and focus on Katherine's story to use as an example of how integration is in fact a "non-argument" when it is well-organized and well-supported by a good group of people.

When Katherine was about five months old, she suffered a severe reaction to DPT (diphtheria, polio, tetanus) innoculations which left her with permanent

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brain damage. The main effect of that reaction has been that Katherine learns more slowly than typical persons. She has no physical disabilities and she does not take any medication. Katherine does not talk, however, she communicates in a number of ways, some of which require careful observation on the part of those in her company.

By the time Katherine had reached the age of 13 she had already been to a number of services and institutions (Surrey Place, Behaviour Management Services, York Central Hospital, York Support Services Network). Her most recent experience began in April, 1984 when her parents had reached the end of their rope in terms of fighting for their daughter's rights. Katherine went to a local group home as a temporary placement to learn behaviour and life skills.

As it is professionally customary in our society, Katherine was subjected to a number of assessments and tests. Within the group home setting the trained staff observed and recorded behaviours, analyzed past records and checklists, conducted interviews, and taught analytic or diagnostic lessons.

Katherine's educational experiences consisted of another temporary placement in a "school for the retarded". The classroom in which Katherine was placed taught students "life skills" within the school day. There were four other students in Katherine's class. There was one full-time teacher and one teaching assistant. There was a kitchen stove, fridge and a double sink. The low shelves consisted of young children's toys, therapy balls and other medical equipment around the room. There were bulletin boards with the seasons, occasions and events decorating the room. This room may have been a very pleasant atmosphere for young children but it is simply not appropriate for teenagers.

Katherine's father speny a day at the school observing her activities. He discovered Katherine was spending 40 percent time-on-task, and 60 percent doing less productive activities. His personal conclusions were that his daughter was not having her educational needs met.

The segregated model of educating individuals with challenging needs formulates the values and attitudes of the staff. The prevailing attitudes come from individual perspectives which do not necessarily serve the needs of the individual but tend to suit the structure of the segregated class. Within the structure of a school system there are four different perspectives to consider:

1. Administrative Perspective
   - Students with a mental handicap require a shorter day
   - Students with a mental handicap cost thousands of dollars more per regular student

- Segregated settings are appropriate experiences with some structured interactions
- Regular students are given five hours of instruction.

2. Teacher's Perspective
   - Students with a mental handicap require constant teaching and supervision
   - Professionals are the only qualified teachers of students with a mental handicap
   - The population should have great respect for the teachers of these students
   - Teaching people with a mental handicap is the most demanding in the education field
   - Teachers are constantly frustrated and pressured
   - Teacher's job is to teach extended life skills training for the children

3. Student's Perspective
   - Students with a mental handicap need to be taken "care of"
   - Students with a mental handicap get too exhausted from learning by the end of the day and therefore require shorter hours
   - Students with a mental handicap require supervision and teaching skills during lunch hour.

4. Parent's Perspective
   - No promotion of meaningful interaction between parents and staff
   - Hours of instruction for children are substantially shorter than that of the regular schools (4.5 hours vs 5 hours)
   - Educational needs are not being met in the segregated setting.

(Stan Woronko, parent)

There is a great injustice being done to so many people like Katherine. People must start fighting for the right to be educated alongside their peers. Stan (Katherine's father) filed a complaint on behalf of Katherine to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. (Stan wrote the complaint as Katherine's advocate.) He stated very clearly that Katherine should be allowed the same opportunities as the neighbourhood children.

> "The Public Board of Education is denying me access to a regular neighbourhood school. As I have been labelled as trainable mentally retarded I am being placed in a segregated school. I am being denied a wide variety of stimuli and experiences of interaction with typical children in a typical school environment. I am being denied the opportunity of learning

regular social skills through social interaction with typical peers. This denial of experience and opportunities will also prevent other children from benefitting from interactions with handicapped children and will make it more difficult for them to learn to value the handicapped as equal to all other human beings. The program at the school I am attending fails to meet my needs for an appropriate education offered to the Board's non-handicapped students."

A segregated school environment not only lacks in opportunities for integration but it also breeds negative attitudes. These attitudes are clearly apparent in the observations made by people about Katherine while she attended the segregated school:

- difficulty adjusting to classroom routines
- increasing acceptance of novel environment
- inappropriate vocalizations, facepoking, pika, masturbating
- emotional outbursts on occasion
- working on various living skills (washing, pouring, clearing)
- warm, friendly, affectionate with staff
- attracts attention of staff by pulling and pinching
- short attention span
- functioning at very sensory level
- shakes uncontrollably when faced with doubt
- moody at times
- progress in movement and posture
- poor peer interaction usually ignores others
- bored
- more deviant behaviours at school than at home
- comfortable, well-loved, adjusted and accepted at home.

It was clear that these perspectives were not fostering Katherine's development. Her needs were too generalized and therefore not being met. She would benefit far more from an environment that would give her the opportunities that are rightfully hers.

Katherine's parents were concerned about what the alternatives were for their daughter. They wanted to know where to find help and they wanted to be able to make choices! The time for liberation had come and Stan and Marthe went looking for strategies to get their daughter out of the segregated world. Henceforth the transition began....

Stan and Marthe went to a meeting and spoke to Dr. M. Forest. That was the opening of their dreams. When Dr. Forest asked "What do you want for your

daughter, what's your dream?", Stan and Marthe said, "We want Katherine to go to high school."

The Woronkos had evaluated their reasons for wanting their daughter to be in a regular school. The fact was that her opportunities in the regular setting exceeded those of a segregated environment and so they wanted the freedom to choose the best environment. It was important that they clearly stated their reasons. The opportunities they saw for Katherine in the regular school were:

- opportunity to develop friendships and lasting relationships
- opportunity to experience the normalizing influence of peers, natural proportions, environment and context
- opportunity to be regularly and frequently influenced by peer role models
- opportunity to participate with peers
- opportunity to learn social skills, self-worth, interactions with typical peers
- opportunity to learn communication skills through interaction
- opportunity to learn functional skills, independence, participation
- opportunity to learn in natural contexts of real world environments
- opportunity to learn good judgment, cope in life situations in natural contexts
- opportunity to contribute to society
- opportunity to overcome stigma, and be socially accepted
- opportunity to experience individual interaction with peers
- opportunity to have supports in regular environment
- opportunity not to be subject to harmful constraint of low expectations
- opportunity to have individual programs in natural contexts.

It took a group of people committed to Katherine as an individual to listen to the dreams and build a strategy around achieving that dream. It was decided that there was a need for a support person for Katherine to facilitate her integration into the community and later into the high school.

Carrie Hoskins was hired as Katherine's community facilitator. Katherine attended a regular day camp that summer and did many community-oriented outings. It was a time for her to get used to the real world in a gentle way and prepare her for high school experience beginning in September. Her parents were still in the middle of legal battles at this time as the public school was refusing to change Katherine's placement. She was, however, eligible for the local Catholic high school and so Katherine's parents approached St. Robert's High School and were given a positive response.

The opinion that was passed on to me at St. Robert's was that Katherine was the least likely to be integrated. The overriding intention of course, was that Katherine was to integrate herself. She needed some way to communicate and build friendships both inside and outside school. That's where my role came into play as her facilitator and advocate.

The obvious difference between the segregated setting and the integrated setting is demonstrated by the drastic difference in opportunities. All the dreams that Katherine's parents had, could come true, and they did! After six months of Katherine being fully integrated in the high school, her support being built, we were able to come up with our own profile on who Katherine was. This is substantially different from that of the one written by the former service people in her life. The support group saw her as being:

- inquisitive
- appreciative of environment
- friendly, uninhibited
- emotional, stubborn
- learns very quickly
- no lack of self-esteem, sure of herself
- likes music, machinery, food, physical contact
- not bored
- great improvement in attention span
- typical teenager
- getting more eye contact with people.

How did Katherine's profile change so incredibly? In the role of the facilitator there was someone who listened to what Katherine wanted for a change and assisted in getting people to know her.

An obvious need was to build a support circle so that Katherine's needs would be met. A lot of people have found this to be a good strategy for getting a devalued person their respect and value as an individual. One of the first things you need to do in building a support circle is ask the individual, "What do you want, what do you really want?" That person should be able to respond to that question if they are really ready for a change in their life. The group must know the individual and be able to listen deeply with care and love. The individual needs to be challenged and needs commitment from those involved. At a group meeting with the support circle, there needs to be someone who can facilitate the thought process. This person can empower the individual through advocacy. The group usually consists of friends, relatives, co-workers, lovers, and professionals. It's good to have a cross-section of people. These people bring together all the necessary elements in developing any kind of structured curriculum or life-plan.

This is exactly the kind of group that Katherine now has. One that allows her to dream but also challenges her to move on. Because Katherine is a young teenager, a lot of final decisions are made by her parents. We have found that there is a double circle forming: one for Katherine and her friends and one for her parents. Their circle does the same thing, keeps them dreaming and feeling supported in their day-to-day struggles.

As a result of the integration, her family commented that she is:
- less nervous and frustrated
- pays more attention to surroundings
- selective with her eyes
- more relaxed
- happy
- increase of appropriate beahviours.

To find out what people really want we use the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS). The process looks at the individual's strengths and needs. Through this, strategies are built for achieving the needs by building on the strengths. The principle of the whole process is to allow people to dream and have power over the decisions in their lives. I think you would agree that this sort of process is valuable in anyone's life! It's very structured and a lot of work, but can also be a lot of fun!

The facilitator in the school setting is responsible for implementing the action plan. The key to achieving this involves four things: good leadership, empowering the individual and his/her peers to make decisions, risking mistakes, and enjoying miracles. If the facilitator takes on the role of a shadow, he or she is making a mistake. If you're not a shadow, you don't have control and you're more likely to allow miracles to happen.

The facilitator needs to build support for himself and search out allies. The administration, consultants, parents and most of all the students can all be resources and allies. Students are really the hidden resource in this case. It is my experience that they are the ones who make it happen.

To maintain all of this support I had to build communications between all those involved. It begins with the facilitator listening to what Katherine was saying and making sure that Katherine's friends were listening to each other. What develops as a result is a communications network. It looks like the following:
- parent to facilitator
- teacher to facilitator
- parent to teacher

- teacher to students
- parent to students
- facilitator to students.

Everyone must be in tune with what is happening. This is discussed at the the circle meetings and ultimately becomes a very important part of Katherine's communication system.

Within the school Katherine was ultimately responsible for carrying out her daily schedule. This took great initiative on Katherine's part and although she is interdependent she really took charge of her own routines. Her schedule this year was full and she had a student as a support in each class.

Period 1 - Religion - Josie (Grade 9)
Period 2 - Family Studies - Lori (Grade 13)
Period 3 - Drama - Brigette (Grade 10)
Period 4 - Lunch Prep - Michelle (Grade 13)
Period 5 - Art - Rita (Grade 9)
Period 6 - Lunch - Susan, Josie, Cathy
Period 7 - Typing - Cindy (Grade 13)
Period 8 - Phys. Ed./Health - Susan, Cathy (Grade 10)
Period 9 - Library Job - Denise (Grade 13)

Katherine participated regularly in all the events of school with her friends. As a result, I found that a lot of interesting people met each other and became friends through Katherine.

Integration is not an issue. Good education is the issue. The concept of advocacy has been lost in most educational systems. The whole idea of someone taking a risk and failing is somehow viewed as a sin. Students of all kinds are not having their voices heard because there are no advocates. Advocacy simply allows a person to live to their potential with constant challenge and motivation to move on. Our school seems to push for the individual to reach his or her potential but we want each person to do it alone! The object of anadvocate is to be sure the individual is heard and has the appropriate support in his or her life. We want to foster interdependence because all people have a support group they can depend on. If Katherine's advocates hadn't been around over the past three years, I believe she would have ended up in an institution, or died very young unaware of the world around her.

It's time for a value-based education system. It's time to listen. It's time for change.

Circles

Judith Snow and Marsha Forest

The notion of building support "circles" was first introduced a few years ago in the context of helping a specific individual named Judith Snow acquire and maintain a personal support system that would keep her out of a chronic care hospital and empower her to lead an independent life.

Judith's support circle was called the Joshua Committee and was formed to respond to Judith's physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Since its inception, the Joshua Committee's success has inspired many other groups across Canada to set up their own Joshua Committees around many different types of individuals who needed the network of relationships provided by such a committee.

Many of these individuals are children who need a strong network of support in order to participate in regular educational and social activities. Very often the parents of these children need this network as well because they feel alone, frustrated or helpless.

Seven truths about circles

But no two support circles are the same. (We suggest each group have its own name.) However, there are some general principles that are applicable to all circles.

1. Circles often form around two people who are in a very strong relationship, where the advocate speaks for the challenged person. This was true for Judith when she had a physical collapse. Marsha called friends to her house to discuss and carry out what was necessary to get Judith back on the road to health again. This is also true for parents who speak for a young child with a challenging need. As these children move into adulthood, it is often necessary to build a double circle: one around the parents and one around the child and her or his new friends. This allows the child to develop independence. Later on, a single circle around the challenged adult will remain, with or without his or her advocate, depending on other circumstances.

2. Strong circles usually form around a person who herself or himself **wants** to change. Such people make phenomenal changes in their own lives once they have the required support of a circle. On the other hand, you cannot

for a circle on someone who is content with life or afraid to change. Meetings will always be boring and the group will eventually fall apart.

3. The person who is the focus of the circle will grow in direct relationship to the honesty and commitment of the circle membership. Her/his vision is shaped and brought into reality by a combination of deep listening, caring, challenges and committed efforts on the part of each circle member.

4. The purpose and direction of the circle is defined by the dream of the person in question. They key question must constantly be: **What do you really want?** When a circle loses touch with the dream of the "circled" individual, she or he will subvert or stall the process by getting sick, behaving badly, or otherwise holding up the process until real listening happens again.

5. If a circle is too small, everyone will feel pressured. Invite more people to join! If a circle is too big, people will quit because they don't have enough to do. The size of the circle is dependent on how much the "circled" person wants to change and how fast. Small circles form around little dreams; big ones are needed for big changes.

6. Circles often come into being first during a crisis because this is when the "circled" person figures out what he or she really needs instead of simply tolerating and adjusting to things as they are. A circle can form without a crisis if the central person is prepared to ask for what she or he really needs. Quite often people ask for what they think they can **get,** not what they want. This causes other people to feel manipulated and they back off or reject the individual. When a person asks for what she or he really needs, other people feel needed and empowered to commit energy and time. This explains why circles are usually made up of people whom the circled person has known fora long time, but never successfully approached before.

7. Because it is often difficult for a person who is devalued or his/her advocate to tell the dream or ask for what they really need, it is often necessary for a facilitator to work with the person during the formation of the circle, or at other times when the group seems "stuck". The facilitator may be a member of another support circle. Sometimes a "broker" or "co-ordinator" may be paid to work at forming these groups. Such a person must be deeply committed to the value of relationships in a person's life and not therapy. She or he must be a good listener who is ready to love and challenge the circled person in order to discover the empowering dream. The facilitator must trust the circle members, helping them to

value the story and the person behind the story. The facilitator must also be clear about the amount of time and the number of meetings she or her can spend with each circle in order to maintain everyone's trust.

The nuts and bolts of circle building

Once people decide they want a circle, where do they begin? Real examples describe the process.

Marie* and her husband Bob are splitting up. They have two girls. One has been rejected because people feel she cannot be educated in a regular class in a real school (as opposed to a segregated school).

Marie has just lost a year-long battle with her local school board to have her daughter Joan integrated. The fight has been messy and Marie is emotionally, physically and financially drained. She has also been spending every afternoon and weekend with her daughter because Joan has no friends and no extra support services to meet unusual physical needs.

Marie finds herself thinking about placing Joan in a group home for handicapped children and wonders why things have gotten so out of hand.

Joan was in a regular grade 1 class last year, but her teacher kept her on a separate program and often sent the aide and Joan away from the class to do entirely different things from the other first grade students. Joan made no friends because the students soon learned from the modelling of the teacher that Joan was not really one of the kids. Now the school board says that they have nothing to offer. Marie is saying, "If this is integration, I don't want it! Integration doesn't work. She's better off in a segregated school."

Sandy is another parent with two sons, both of whom have challenging needs. She knows that Marie needs help and she has reached out through phone calls and visits. She invites another friend, Judith, who is experienced at building support circles to get to know Marie and to offer her help. Sandy also invites along another parent who has a child with challenging needs in a good integration situation. Together they visit Marie and Joan at their home.

Judith listens to Marie and encourages her over and over again to say what she really wants. She encourages her to get angry, not at Joan, but at the professionals who have failed to see her daughter as a gifted addition to a classroom.

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* All names are pseudonyms

Judith explains what circles are all about; how people would support her to take on another appeal, build friends around Joan, find a better job and get her other daughter a better summer program.

At first Marie says she has no friends, but with some encouragement she is able to come up with a list of 15 neighbours, friends and professionals who have been supportive over the last few years.

Sandy and the others offer their support and agree to help Marie invite everyone to a night of story telling and dreaming. When the evening arrives, everyone shows up and Marie starts to tell everybody how grateful she is for their concern. At first her story reveals no big problems, but Judith helps her to tell the real story, to trust that people will listen and support her. With much anger, frustration and tears, the story unfolds and then the dream of a real education and real friends for Joan, and of an important new job for Marie plus a chance to start life again, also unfolds.

Several people immediately offer to pressure the school board through personal contacts, a petition and a new appeal. Neighbourhood children offer to invite Joan and her sister to different parties, weekends of fun, and the local Boys' and Girls' Club. Someone knows of a job coming up and someone else has heard of a retraining program at the local community college. Another has a teenage niece who would love to babysit. Three or four people have nothing to say, but they offer to come again to another circle meeting. Judith helps Marie to accept these offers graciously and not to put herself down. Everyone agrees that Marie does not have to bake for the next meeting, but they will bring their own pot luck supper. **The circle has begun.**

Unfortunately, the pattern that led to this crisis is not unusual. Marie has allowed herself to fall into the handicapping trap of taking on all the work and fighting herself, allowing herself and her daughters to become isolated and victimized by the system. She wants to protect her family from rejection and hurt. She also has some fears about exposing Joan to the real world.

From this story we learn that no one can change the system by her to himself and that burnout results and everyone loses without a support system.

Over and over we see the pattern. A parent starts to believe all the negative messages sent through the years by the medical and educational establishments. The parent starts to see the child as a problem rather than seeing that the system is failing the child. Afraid to burden others, the parent becomes more and more isolated, fragmented, frustrated and hysterical. Because she believes that nobody else cares, or can understand, believe in or love her

child, she never reaches out for the help that neighbours and friends can provide. Rather she becomes the recipient of the wrong kind of service. The help she really needs is the help we all need.

The mystique is powerful. This child, who has medical-sounding labels seems to need experts, pills and treatment. But what she really needs are friends, activities and common sense guidance to support her life.

Marie has learned to ask for what she things she can get, **not** what she really wants. She has learned to call segregation, integration and abuse, help, instead of using the real language of neighbours and the community.

Marie needs the help of others to ask and to speak about her real experience. She needs to discover that people will care about and believe in her dreams for herself and for her daughters. Many circles are started by a facilitator like Judith who will be around long enough to support Marie in her needs.

What we can see from this and other similar stories is that ordinary citizens and neighbours do care but are rarely asked. Once asked, they will respond with a multitude of ordinary resources and lots of energy.

The next story shows what happens when a strong circle is built.

Helen had been segregated all her life. Her parents loved her, but had lost all sense of purpose, direction and hope for her. Helen attended a behaviour management program intended to curb her more disturbing activities and she came home on weekends. With no friends and a weakening family tie, the future looked monotonous and dark for her.

At the Education for Integration course held at The G. Allan Roeher Institute, the parents joined with other families in sharing dreams and stories. When asked what they really wanted, the Rockfords dared admit they wanted Helen to go to a regular high school.

With the support of their new friends, they decided to go to the school system and ask for Helen to be registered at the local high school. Their request was denied and school officials turned nasty during appeal procedures, revealing their underlying prejudice against people with challenging needs. At the human rights board, compromise was accepted and Helen moved into the atlernative school system.

Marsha Forest asked a supportive psychologist to help do an educational plan for Helen. He spent the time necessary to get to know her well so that he

could talk about her strengths and gifts knowledgeably, as well as think with her family about ordinary solutions to her needs. One glaring aspect of Helen's life was her complete isolation from friends of her own age. Also, her parents had great difficulty articulating any positive attributes for their daughter.

Their view of her was reflected in her bedroom, the room of a three-year-old child. It was filled with teddy bears and Mickey Mouse toys.

This family was stuck!!

Marsha helped the family find a grant to hire a young woman who began to build a circle of friends around Helen. She and Helen went horseback riding, shopping and later went to a summer program with kids that attended Helen's future high school. The young woman encouraged and allowed the kids to be with Helen, occasionally modelling appropriate interactions for them. Soon the kids were helping to redesign Helen's bedroom into a teenage-style room and going with her and her facilitator to shops and movies.

When the school year began, Helen was no stranger to the high school students and soon a circle formed. The facilitator invited a group of teenagers to help design and implement a program at school. They built her curriculum around strengths she had shown during the summer, drawing from the psychologist's work as well.

Two circles were formed: one for the parents and one for Helen. Soon Helen was going to wrestling matches, dances and attending regular high school classes. Her parents, in shock from having a house full of teenagers, were enjoying a new vision for themselves and their daughter. They learned to let go of her, to let her be with her friends, take real risks and participate in teenage life. Helen came home to stay as her behaviour became more and more like that of her new friends. Two young people from the circle became paid after-school support workers with Special Services funding.

This summer, Helen is going to be a Counsellor In Training with three other teenagers at an integrated summer program at York University. The future holds nothing but promise for Helen.

This example reveals the importance of a positive vision in the life of a person with challenging needs. For 14 years, Helen's parents had believed that her life could go nowehere and so it was indeed going nowhere. As soon as they knew that she had gifts to share with her community and especially with friends her own age, they began to change and soon Helen revealed how ready she too, was to change.

It took a great deal of courage and enormous doses of support, but this family made incredible changes in one year. Helen herself has unmasked the ignorance of her former educators who labelled her at the bottom of their imaginary scale of abilities. She has revealed that she is a gifted member of her teenage crowd.

In this story as well, we see that importance of two circles or two support systems. Teenagers naturally must lead a life of activity, partly separate from their parents needs and routines. This is a normal part of gaining an adult life of interdependence in the community. A double support group allows this separateness to happen.

We also can see that other teenagers consider Helen important. A wide variety of teenagers were attracted to the idea of the circle and ultimately to Helen herself, as a real friends in their world.

We have one final story. Circles are not for everyone.

Duncan is a 42-year-old man who is a strong advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. His entire life focuses on his own challenging needs and those of others. He knew about Judith and her circle and decided he wanted one, too.

A dozen people who knew Duncan well gathered at his apartment one evening at his invitation. Duncan spoke about his many struggles to manage his own attendant care services, plus his advocating for others. It became clear as the meeting progressed that Duncan's vision for himself did not include any change in his priorities or lifestyle. He was looking for helpers in his huge debt, without wanting to examine the causes of his difficulty and how they could be altered.

The meeting dissolved with the realization that Duncan did not really want the challenge of a circle. Duncan is still out there, still fighting and finding new allies every year. He really didn't need or want a support circle.

This story reveals that having relationships is a challenge to anyone and particularly to someone who is viewed as "needing help." The challenge is to change and participate along with others in the circle, not sit back and tell others what to do. Relationships demand a two-way street, so cirlces are not for everyone.

Conclusion

Building circles and living in the community are complex and challenging tasks for anyone. But, we feel that for most families and adults with special needs, the circle is a pre-condition for real community participation. The circle is the focus of relationship and responsibility that values and empowers the contribution of the challenged person. The circle is the means whereby ordinary and professional help can be combined to bring a vision to life in the everyday world. In this way, as well, everyone involved can grow and be known for her or his unique place in the group.

The circle is not a new concept. However, in the context of today's struggle to integrate and fully value people with challenging needs, the circle is truly revolutionary.